THE RECIPROCAL INFLUENCES BETWEEN CLERGY AND LAITY ON SOCIAL ISSUES: AN HISTORICAL INVESTIGATION OF MISSOURI'S PRESBYTERIAN CLERGY IN MARION COUNTY ON THE SUBJECT OF ABOLITION -- 1835-1845

by

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To Sandra:

e la nuda notte
la tua voce consola
di lucenti ardori e letizie.

. . . .

ma dal profondo tuo sangue,
nel giusto tempo umano,
renasceremo senza dolore.

Salvatore Quasimodo

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INTRODUCTION

Contemporary sociologists have devoted much time to the investigation of religious influences on political behavior including the reciprocal relationship between clergy and laymen on specific social issues. These studies have yielded a profitable set of hypotheses by which similar events can be studied in an historical context.

This study, based upon these current sociological findings, will examine the relationship of the Presbyterian clergy and laity to slavery and abolition with specific focus upon the social conflict resulting from abolitionism in Marion County, Missouri.

Procedure

The following format will, therefore, be adhered to: First, a survey of current sociological studies will be made and the major hypotheses for this study will be outlined. Second, an historical analysis of the National Presbyterian Church's attitude toward slavery will be presented, taking into account the divergent theological interpretations within the church. Third, the secular attitudes in Missouri in reference to slavery will be given with special stress on the period of greatest concern, 1835-45. Having thus established the framework for the study, the fourth section will be a specific case study of the Presbyterian efforts in Marion County, Missouri, toward abolitionism and the resultant social conflict.

CHAPTER I

SOCIOLOGICAL FINDINGS

Gerhard Lenski, in The Religious Factor, states that "the greater the degree of a man's involvement in a group, the greater its influence upon him."[1] Since there are many groups in which an individual may involve himself, all having a lesser or greater influence upon him, a major difficulty arises when an individual finds himself immersed to differing degrees within two groups which are in conflict on a particular issue. The situation is further complicated when group A and group B have essentially the same adherents.

Such groupings at a local level, for example, would include the church of a particular denomination and the particular society of which the church is a part. These two groupings, one specific and one general, are in reciprocal relationship, each influencing the other especially on questions of value, ethics, and morality. Should the values of the two come into conflict on a particular issue having social implications the adherents of the groups must resolve the differences to their best ability. The intensity of the conflict will depend on the issue and the urgency of the issue to the well-being of the groups involved. The individual, of course, will feel the intensity of this conflict. This situation is further complicated by the individual's being more involved in one particular group than in ~~the~~ other.

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[1] Gerhard Lenski, The Religious Factor (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1963), p. 22.

For example, the clergy and laity are immersed both in the church and in society yet it is reasonable to assume that the clergy, on the most part, will be more exposed to and indoctrinated in distinctive teachings of their particular church, whereas the laity will be more involved in and influenced by their social environment which has a greater range of influences upon the individual than those of the church.

According to Charles Y. Glock and Benjamin B. Ringer in their study of the protestant Episcopal Church, the clergy in such a conflicting situation will reflect the official position of the church and not the view of the local congregation.[2] Both Lenski and Jerome Davis, however, conclude from their studies that the clergyman is ". . . profoundly influenced by the social milieu in which he is immersed.[3] The fact that these studies draw conflicting conclusions reflects that each specific relationship between clergy and laity is an individual problem. The position of the clergyman will depend on the issue involved, his personality, and his exposure to the value system of the society in which he works. Though in their particular case Glock and Ringer may be correct, if a generalization is to be made the evidence seems to support the conclusion of Lenski and that of Davis.

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[2] Charles Y. Glock and Benjamin B. Ringer, "Church Policy and the Attitude of Ministers and

The chief role of the clergyman is in communicating the teachings of the Church to a local congregation; the minister, therefore, stands as a crucial link between it and the Church. The ability of the clergyman to influence the laity depends first upon the exposure of the laity to particular social attitudes, and second on the leadership role of the clergyman in the religious association. The layman

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Parishioners on Social Issues," American Sociological Review, XXII (April, 1956), p. 156. Cited hereafter as Glock, American Sociological Review, XXII.

[3] Jerome Davis, "The Social Action Pattern of the Protestant Religious Leader," American Sociological Review, I (February, 1936), p. 114. Cited hereafter as Davis, American Sociological Review, I.

will usually follow the leadership of the clergy in ecclesiastical affairs[4] and will respect and obey

> his role as pastoral director insofar as he demonstrates a capacity for executive leadership and insofar as he is able to combine this with a spiritual authority derived from the Bible, from the traditional doctrines of the church, and from the dynamic of his own personality.[5]

The reason for this is suggested in a study of majority and expert opinions on attitude formation. This study states that, "religious persons are a little more inclined to be 'led' by experts in that field because of the relationship established between pastors to parishioners."[6] But the laity, on the reverse side, ". . . distrust or ignore the clergy's opinions on issues of crucial secular significance."[7] This departure is of the utmost importance and seems to prevail even when the minister displays dynamic leadership in other areas.

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[4] Paul M. Harrison, "Church and the Laity Among Protestants," Annals of the American Association of Political and Social Sciences, CCCXXXII (November, 1960), p. 46. Cited hereafter as Harrison, The Annals, CCCXXXII.

[5] *Ibid*., p. 45.

[6] H. E. Burth and D. R. Falkenburg, Jr., "The Influence of Majority and Expert Opinion on Religious Attitude," Journal of Social Psychology, XIV (November, 1941), p. 276.

[7] Harrison, The Annals, CCCXXXII, p. 46.

Paul Harrison cites an observation in an unpublished doctoral dissertation of Howard Meyer,

> In a church study which had a 'dynamic leader' the minister was able to obtain a greater involvement of members in church activities, but was not able to bring about significant attitude changes in most of the congregation especially in those areas of community life about which the members had deepseated attitudes.[8]

This infers that the secular environment of the laity may well exert a stronger influence upon their attitude formation regardless of the position of the Church.

The protestant layman is not totally directed by secular attitudes; his role is indeed ambivalent, for while having a particular relationship to his clergyman, he also has what he considers to be a God-given task. Max Weber clearly states that for the layman:

> The only way of living acceptably to God [is] not to surpass worldly morality in

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[8] *Ibid.*, quoting Howard William Meyers, "A Study of the Effects of Environment Upon the Attitudes and Actions of the Members of Two Churches." (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1959), pp. 215-16.

> monastic asceticism, but solely through the fulfillment of the obligations imposed upon the individual by his position in the world. That [is] his calling.[9]

Thus the layman must make the doctrinal and ethical teachings of the Church applicable to his particular social environment, and he guards jealously his role of making what he considers to be the true relationship between these two elements. It must be noted, however, that because of his exposure to a social milieu the layman will have a greater understanding of it than of purely theological dogma.

The difference between clergy and laity on this point is a matter of emphasis as opposed to any real firm distinction. All men must resolve contradictions between ethical and moral demands of the Church and particular everyday concerns and attitudes of society. The important point is that the layman feels himself more qualified to solve social problems than the clergy. This is an important attitude considering the fact that Davis found the clergyman, not the layman, more inclined toward social justice than the average member of his community.[10]

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[9] Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, trans. Talcott Parsons (New edition; New York: Scribner, 1958), p. 80.

In spite of this propensity toward justice, however, the minister will not be any more radical in action ". . . than the overwhelming majority of the respectable class in his community."[11] Should a clergyman press for change on a particular issue in disregard of the laity's attitude, he risks severe disruption of his congregation, if not dismissal from his post.

The effectiveness of the clergyman as the communicator of his Church's position depends on the way in which the Church as a national entity has, in fact, resolved the conflict. The Church at this level is perhaps more influenced by diverse elements than is the individual minister.

In this context the clergyman at the local level is a microcosm of his Church at the national level as it attempts to make its message relevant to a changing pluralistic society. The Church, to meet this need of relevance, must of necessity "become broadly inclusive and become representative of the community as a whole."[12] In order to maintain this inclusiveness the Church is faced with conflicting roles especially in formulating official positions on social and political issues.

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[10] Davis, American Sociological Review, I, p. 114.

[11] Ibid.

Glock and Ringer in their study hypothesized that the inclusiveness of the Church would be reflected in its official stand on certain social issues. For example, they felt that when the parishioners held divergent views, the church's position would be equivocal. But when parishioners were partisan on an issue, the church would be equally committed in its position.[13] The study revealed that the official church policy of the Episcopal Church was strongly in favor of supporting the United Nations, and of endorsing liberal immigration policy and the rights of conscientious objectors to refuse to bear arms. On the other side, the church opposed discrimination based on color or race and intermarriage of parishioners with Roman Catholics if the children were to be raised Catholic. The church was equivocal in its position on war, labor policy, political involvement of the church, and on government control.[14]

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[12] Glock, American Sociological Review, XXII, p. 149.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 152.

It was found that on only one issue--the United Nations--did the parishioners fully agree with the stand of the church.[15] On any other issues on which the church was committed--on human rights, conscientious objectors, intermarriage, and immigration--there was a wide divergence of opinion among parishioners.[16] On three of the four issues on which the church policy was equivocal--war, the political role of the church, and government control--parishioners' opinion was relatively uniform. "They [were] agreed that war [was] justified under many conditions, that government control of economic life should be limited, and that the church should not engage in partisan politics. On the fourth issue--labor--parishioners' opinion [was] divergent,"[17] which was reflected in the church's position. Glock and Ringer state that while there is a vast difference in their findings as opposed to the anticipated relationship, the church "nevertheless reflects a desire to keep from alienating parishioners."[18]

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[14] Ibid., pp. 151-152.

[15] Ibid., p. 154.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid., p. 153.

They pointed out that on war--the church "in the face of prevailing parishioners' sentiment . . . compromised its position to the secular one."[19] On government control and the political role of the church--the church's policy reflects a compromise with parishioners' attitudes.[20] On intermarriage--the conflict between the strongly opposed church and the favorably disposed laity seemed to be found in the traditional stand of the church. "Since the survival of the church is tied in with this issue, it is unlikely to compromise its position despite opposing parishioners' sentiment."[21] On human rights, conscientious objectors, and immigration--Glock and Ringer suggest that 20 or more years ago the laity were agreed to a conservative point of view. "The adoption of a partisan position on the church's part then appears as a response to this shift to a more divergent view in parishioners' sentiment."[22] Glock and Ringer conclude that:

> The church's social policy, then, depends on the nature of the issue and the state of

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[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid., p. 154.

[22] Ibid.

> sentiment among parishioners. On issues where parishioners' sentiment is relatively homogeneous and self-interest considerable, the church's ability to deviate from the views of its parishioners is severely limited. It must compromise its policy and accommodate itself to the views of its parishioners. But on issues where parishioners' sentiment is relatively unsettled and the church has a definite normative interest, the church is better able to step forth in a firm and decisive manner.[23]

The tendency of the national church to be inclusive allows a great latitude of opinion to prevail throughout the church structure; this makes the minister's function as communicator of policy more difficult because the layman does not see his particular point of view directly condemned by the church.

A further difficulty for the clergyman is the ineffectualness of the sermon to change the attitudes of the listener. Within the protestant church the sermon has been the focal point of worship as well as the principal mode of ethical and moral pronouncements to a congregation. It could be assumed that the sermon would be the most effective means used by the clergyman in linking the church's teachings with social issues. Studies in communication, however, present a different conclusion.

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[23] *Ibid*., p. 155.

The dominant effect of communication upon an audience is typically found to be "reinforcement or at least constancy of opinion. Minor change is the next most common and conversion is . . . the most rare."[24] John and Matilda Riley state that:

> . . . the recipient of a message may ignore or misinterpret those parts of the message . . . which do not conform to his interests and tastes, or which tend to disorganize or threaten his other perceptions and the decisions which he has made previously. On the other hand, he may pay special heed to those parts of the message which seem to reinforce his point of view, fitting them in with his likes and dislikes, or organizing materials already in his mind.[25]

It seems to be that mass communication is most effective when people are "not previously inclined one way or another on the issue in question."[26]

> People tend to expose themselves selectively to communication in accord with their existing views and to avoid exposure to unsympathetic communication. If exposed to unsympathetic material, they not infrequently distort its meaning so as to bring it into accord with their existing view. People also

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[24] Joseph T. Klapper, The Effects of Mass Communication (Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press, 1960), p. 15.

[25] John W. Riley, Jr., and Matilda White Riley, "Mass Communication and the Social System," Sociology Today: Problems and Prospects, ed. Robert K. Merton, et al. (New York: Basic Books Inc., 1959), p. 546.

[26] Klapper, p. 60.

> tend selectively to retain sympathetic materials better than unsympathetic material.[27]

If these findings can be applied to the minister's role of communicating church policy, it would seem to show that his task may well prove unfruitful when the laity are predisposed to a position opposed to the one held by the church.

The net of communication, however, is not simply one of a communicator and a recipient. There is a secondary wave of influence by means of opinion leaders within the group. These leaders pass on communication to their daily associates. The relay, because it is based upon interpersonal relations, becomes a "source of pressure to conform to the group's way of thinking and acting, as well as a source of social support. . . ."[28] It should be noted that the minister as well as the layman is subjected to this secondary wave of influence.

R. R. Brown in his study of the integration crisis in Little Rock shows that the "clergymen . . .

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[27] Ibid., p. 50.

[28] Elihu Katz, "The Two Step Flow of Communication," Mass Communication, ed. Wilbur Schramm (2nd ed.; Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1960), p. 365.

were largely without influence in the time of trouble."[29]

> The division between the pulpit and the pew and the consequent inability of the church to affect a strong moral pressure upon what is actually a series of moral problems is perhaps the most damaging weakness of all.[30]

We cannot dismiss Brown's indictment of the clergy's lack of influence because it was a special Southern situation. This example clearly shows that in the problem of integration the bias of the socio-religious subgroup prevailed over the efforts of the Little Rock Ministerial Association to exert pressure for a peaceful and moral solution to the problem.

Summary of Findings

Although Lenski maintains that the clergyman represents the socio-religious subgroup better than other members in the subgroup, Glock and Ringer's findings seem to challenge this conclusion especially on major social issues. The fact that Lenski did not treat the same issues and categories as did Glock and Ringer does make it difficult to draw an adequate comparison between these two studies. The clergy may subscribe to the values of the subgroup which they lead but this in no way tells us to what extent they influence the formation of the values within the subgroup. The subgroup has two influencing factors: one is secular, the other religious. An individual is influenced by both but not in the same degree of intensity or duration. The secular seems to have a greater degree of influence than does the religious. Perhaps this can be accounted for by prior exposure to its influence and the degree to which secular bias has become internalized by an individual, forming his attitudes, beliefs, and opinions. Social attitudes are equally important in molding parishioners' attitudes toward the clergy and thus their propensity to listen to the opinion of the clergy. The religious influence is effective only in proportion to the ability of the church to apply its values to the secular context in which the parishioners live.

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[29] R. R. Brown, Bigger Than Little Rock (Greenwich, Connecticut: The Seaburg Press, 1958), p. 82.

[30] *Ibid.*, pp. 85-86.

It is surprising that a clergy which is so immersed in the values, thinking and the problems of the subgroup is unable, as in Glock and Ringer's finding and in the study of the Little Rock integrationist crisis, to be influential in forming opinions on socially important issues. Either the clergy is unable to transfer religious values to social problems facing the members of the group, or the more secularized layman will not listen to the pronouncements of the church in an area in which he feels himself to be more competent. Nothing in the sources consulted looks into this question per se. Yet Harrison suggests that the clergy lacks influence when it addresses itself to issues other than those religious in nature. Glock and Ringer in their conclusion point to this secular influence and the sentiment it has produced among parishioners as being a limiting factor upon the church's ability to change the laity's position to a position more to the liking of the church.

The influence of the clergy, then, in forming opinions on social issues is seemingly in inverse proportion to the secularization of society and the ability of this secularization to predispose the laity with certain biases. It is worthwhile to remember that once a group is predisposed to certain biases, the immediate effect of mass communication (or preaching) is to reinforce that bias, and seldom is it able to convert to a different position. The intensity and duration of secular influence and its ability to reinforce group bias and to form a homogeneous attitude within the subgroup will negate the efforts of the clergy to change parishioners' attitudes on certain social issues. It appears that when secular influence has been unable to produce unanimity of attitude within the subgroup, the clergy has a better chance in relating religious values to the social problem.

The following five points can be concluded from the above: (1) That when social and ecclesiastical attitudes are in conflict the attitude which is finally adopted by the church will reflect the majority bias of the respectable class in the community. The exception is at the national level when the church's position will attempt to mitigate the differences in conflict in order to retain the inclusive nature of the church. (2) That the individual's exposure to social values is longer and more intense and thus of greater consequence in attitude formation. (3) That sermons or other means of communication are of little value in changing the predisposed attitude of the layman. (4) That the clergyman's greatest impact will be on those individuals not previously disposed to certain ideas or who already are in agreement with the clergyman's view. (5) That the layman, on certain, if not all social questions, considers himself to be equally competent, if not more so, than the clergyman in judging "rightness."

CHAPTER II

THE NATIONAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH AND THE QUESTION OF SLAVERY

The General Assembly is the ruling body of the Presbyterian Church and is composed of clergymen and laymen from all regions of the country. It is not surprising then to encounter an assortment of interpretations and opinions on the question of slavery. Following the pattern established by the findings of Glock and Ringer, the inclusive nature of the Presbyterian Church caused its General Assembly as early as 1818 to be equivocal in its pronouncements on slavery. This situation can be rightly considered a product of a dominant social and especially economic concern during this period. It is, however, the official view of the Assembly, as well as various theological interpretations on slavery which will be explored in establishing the attitude of Missouri's Presbyterian clergy. No attempt will be made to trace the views of the various branches of the Presbyterian Church, other than the Old and the New School positions, or to trace local ecclesiastic interpretation other than in a broad regional sense of North and South.

There is no singular pro- or anti-slavery position but rather a wide, divergent spectrum of opinion. It is important here only to discuss representative groupings in order to fix a general framework in which the religious attitude on slavery found its expression.

Since religious attitudes among Protestants are less those of adherence to pronouncements than they are the interpretation of scripture in light of prevailing social or personal bias, the author will, after tracing the General Assembly's views, present the ideas of three men representing particular points of view: Charles Hodge of Princeton Seminary (Old School); Albert Barnes (New School); and J. T. Thornwell (Southern).

Two years before the admission of Missouri to the Union, the General Assembly adopted what was to be the high mark of the Church's pronouncements against slavery. The resolution begins with a condemnation of slavery:

> We consider the voluntary enslaving of one part of the human race by another, as a gross violation of the most precious and sacred rights of human nature; as utterly inconsistent with the law of God, which requires us to love our neighbour as ourselves; . . .[1]

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[1] Robert Ellis Thompson, A History of the Presbyterian Churches in the United States (New York: The Christian Literature Co., 1895), p. 364.

This resolution further urges Presbyterians ". . . to obtain the complete abolition of slavery throughout Christendom, and if possible throughout the world."[2] After establishing these principles, the resolution begins to be equivocal as to the actual approach which should be taken in affecting this universal abolition of slavery. A sympathetic understanding is expressed toward those members who, wanting to emancipate their slaves, found them ignorant and having vicious habits which would ". . . render . . . emancipation inconsistent . . . with the safety and happiness of master and the slave."[3]

In a further modification of the principles, this Assembly proclaims:

> As our country has inflicted a most grevious injury on the unhappy Africans, by bringing them into slavery, we cannot, indeed, urge that we should add a second injury to the first, by emancipating them in such a manner that they will be likely to destroy themselves or others.[4]

Thus in a quick stroke the sweeping affirmation of abolition was compromised and the principle of gradual, if not very long-range, emancipation adopted.

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[2] *Ibid.*, p. 365.

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 366.

This principle, as we shall see later, was more clearly articulated by the General Assembly of 1845 and prevailed until the Civil War.

The crucial question, however, which precipitated the writing of the 1818 resolution concerned what should be done if the slaveholder who was a church member sold a slave who was also a church member. The principle established by the General Assembly was to enjoin all local churches ". . . as far as possible, to prevent, all cruelty of whatever kind in the treatment of slaves; . . ."[5] This had a particular reference to acts which would violate the sanctity of the family. Such violation was ". . . to be considered as just ground for discipline and censures of the church."[6] The position of the General Assembly, though, left such questions to be decided by local judicatories.

As Andrew Murray so pointedly states, the surrendering of judgements to local church courts ". . . was a tacit admission that in any issue affecting important social and economic matters, sectionalism would prevail."[7] To state this in another way, when the church is faced with a divergent view among its members on important social issues, the church's stand will be equivocal. This is the stance taken by the church throughout its pronouncements on slavery.

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[5] Ibid., p. 367. [6] Ibid.

[7] Andrew E. Murray, Presbyterians and the Negro--A History (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Historical Society, 1966), p. 28.

In addition to establishing a general position of equivocation on slavery, the Assembly of 1818 also established the precedent for supporting the American Colonization Society. The Society was a product of many motives, which gave it an aura of general acceptance throughout the country. Formed December 28, 1816, it drew support from humanitarians, emancipationists, missionaries, and slaveholders. The extreme positions, that of the abolitionist and that of the Southern slave conspiracy had not as yet produced a context in which the Society would be viewed as a compromise between extremes. The inclusive nature of the Society, coming as it did during the era of "good feeling," caused many churches including the Presbyterian to voice support for it. The Assembly of 1818 admonished the laity ". . . to patronize and encourage the Society . . . for colonizing in Africa . . . the free people of colour in our country."[8] The colonization movement was to become by the 1830's

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[8] Thompson, A History, p. 366.

> . . . the special favorite of Old School Presbyterians, conservatives in general, and Northern businessmen who wanted to avoid alienating their Southern customers. . . .[9]

thereby being the middle ground, a compromise position. This vestige of compromising with slavery prevailed in the Presbyterian Church even after the start of the Civil War, when the influence of the Society to effect peaceful emancipation had long diminished.

That the pronouncements of 1818 were of little effect on the amelioration of slavery can be seen in the Assemblies of 1835 and 1836. During the 1835 Assembly the Chillicothe Presbytery offered a memorial which presented several different issues concerned with the problem of slavery. While the memorial itself demonstrates a particular regional attitude toward the problem, its significance lies in the fact that it presents the problems which faced the church in a social environment rapidly evolving into two separate camps. In many instances institutions formed in the slave-holding areas of the country were in direct conflict with the general principles established by the Assembly of 1818. This memorial points out that in some areas church members were attempting to keep their slaves ignorant ". . . and preventing them from learning to read the word of God. . . ,"[10] and also manifesting ". . . a desire to exclude coloured people a seat in the house of God, [and] at the Lord's table with white people. . . ."[11] Such practices were in direct violation of the Church's position established in 1818. In addition, the Chillicothe Memorial, while not directly condemning the Colonization Society, asked that the Assembly resolve that censure be imposed upon church members who ". . . offer a slave his freedom only on condition that he will leave his country and go into a foreign land. . . ."[12] This demonstrates that by the mid-1830's the Colonization Society was being attacked within the Church.

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[9] Murray, Presbyterians and the Negro, pp. 75-76.

The memorial further asked the Church to respond to the fugitive slave laws by declaring ". . . that when a master advertises a reward for a runaway slave, against whom no other crime is alleged than escaping from his master, he is guilty of a scandalous sin. . . ."[13] Likewise, apprehension of a slave in order to restore him to his master ". . . is a direct violation of the divine law. . . ."[14] In addition, this memorial asked the Assembly to declare ". . . that buying, selling or holding slaves for the sake of gain, is a heinous sin and scandal, and ought to be taken cognizance of by church courts."[15]

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[10] "The General Assembly of 1835," Princeton Review, No. III (July, 1835), p. 451.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid.

Such wording clearly demonstrates that the Chillicothe Memorial was endeavoring to put teeth in the 1818 decision to allow local church courts to decide the moral questions in reference to slavery. The real issue was far beyond the efficacy of the church courts in dealing with the problem of slavery. The real issue was a major theological question. The Chillicothe Memorial was asking the Assembly to unequivocally declare the sinfulness of the institution of slavery. This distinctly shows the evolution of a particular anti-slavery position within the Church.

The Chillicothe Memorial was referred to a committee of five who returned a resolution which on the most part reaffirms the position taken by the

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[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid.

Church in 1818. The introduction to this resolution is of particular interest for it clearly demonstrates the concern of the Church to avoid taking a stand against strong secular forces.

> . . . they [the committee of five] feel the subject to be exceedingly important and difficult and peculiarly delicate at the present time, on account of its political aspects, and on account of the array of hostile opinions which the subject has produced in the community. That the Assembly ought not to be involved in these difficulties--that it is not invested with power to legislate on the subject, or to establish new rules of admission to sealing ordinances. . . .[16]

This report was not adopted by the Assembly and the entire question was referred to a second committee which was to study the issue and submit a report at the General Assembly the following year. The report, while very terse, raised an important hitherto unstated concern that the issue of slavery might, in fact, divide the Church.

> Whereas, the subject of slavery is inseparably connected with the laws of many of the states in this Union, with which it is by no means proper for an ecclesiastical judicatory to interfere, and involves many considerations in regard to which great diversity of opinion, and intensity of feeling, are known to exist in the churches represented in this Assembly; --And whereas there is every reason to believe that any action on the part of the Assembly in reference to this subject would tend to distract

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[16] *Ibid*., p. 452.

> and divide our churches, and would, probably, in no wise promote the benefit of those whose welfare is immediately contemplated in the memorials in question: Therefore,
>
> 1. Resolved, That it is not expedient for the Assembly to take any further order in relation to this subject.[17]

After much debate and offering of amendments the entire question was focused on the following resolution:

> Inasmuch as the constitution of the Presbyterian church, in its preliminary and fundamental principles, declares that no judicatory ought to pretend to make laws to bind the conscience in virtue of their own authority; and as the urgency of the business of the Assembly and the shortness of the time during which they can continue in session, render it important to deliberate and decide judiciously on the subject of slavery in its relations to the church; therefore,
>
> Resolved, That this whole subject be indefinitely postponed.[18]

This resolution passed Yeas 154, Nays 90.[19]

The significance of this vote lies not in the fact that the Church was pro or anti slavery but that it compromised on the entire question. One reporter at the Assembly said, "Many of the Southerners and many of the abolitionists united in voting in the negative."[20] That this resolution was unpopular with the extreme factions demonstrates the continuous principle of equivocation on the major issue. While the vote did represent a consensus of sorts, the moral question in reference to slavery was skirted in an attempt to avoid a direct confrontation of secular, sectional interests.

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[17] "The General Assembly of 1836," Princeton Review, VIII (July, 1836), p. 440.

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 441.

[19] *Ibid.*

The year 1837 saw the rupture of the Presbyterian Church into the Old School and New School factions. The Old School, theologically conservative, had strong support in the South. In general terms the Old School was sympathetic to the Southern position whereas the more liberal New School wing was anti-slavery in persuasion. But the 1837 schism was not a split over slavery; it was a split over theological orthodoxy. While Charles Hodge, the Old School spokesman, advocated a pro-slavery position and Albert Barnes, the New School theologian, championed the anti-slavery cause the official positions of both factions tended to resemble the traditional Presbyterian position established in 1818.

> Like most Americans, the majority of Presbyterians, Old School and New School, were opposed to slavery in theory, but favored

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[20] Ibid.

> letting the South handle the problem in its own way.[21]

Both factions of the Presbyterian Church were faced in subsequent years with many memorials on the issue of slavery. The Old School Assembly of 1845 is particularly noteworthy in that the position of the Church was set out in theological terms which seems to suggest that the theological ramifications for and against slavery had been worked out substantially prior to the Civil War. The major question of the sinfulness of slavery which the Presbyterians had skillfully avoided in 1836 now was met head on. The question to be decided was:

> Do the Scriptures teach that the holding of slaves without regard to circumstances, is a sin, the renunciation of which, should be made a condition of membership in the church of Christ?[22]

In answering this all-important question the Assembly stated several principles it considered to be theologically sound. The Church, it was argued, was a spiritual body, ". . . whose jurisdiction extends only to the religious faith, and moral conduct of her members."[23] The Church could not declare sinful or establish conditions for membership which Christ, as head of the Church, did not so state. Using this as a guiding rule, the Assembly affirmed that the New Testament unmistakably condones the condition of slavery while at the same time allows slave holders church membership. Seeing this as the most clear and consistent interpretation of the New Testament, the Assembly declared that it could not

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[21] Murray, Presbyterians and the Negro, p. 104.

[22] "The General Assembly of 1845," Princeton Review, XVII (July, 1845), p. 438.

> . . . denounce the holding of slaves as necessarily a heinous and scandalous sin, calculated to bring upon the church the curse of God, without charging the Apostles of Christ with conniving such sin, introducing into the church such sinners, and thus bringing upon them the curse of the Almighty.[24]

The Assembly in establishing other principles in the relationship of the Church to the issue of slavery declared:

> . . . that however desirable it may be to ameliorate the condition of the slaves . . . or to remove slavery from our country, these objects we are fully persuaded, can never be secured by ecclesiastical legislation.[25]

The Church at this point clearly abdicated its responsibility to effectively use moral suasion to bring an end to slavery. It went further by establishing a principle which can only be considered to advocate a gradual form of emancipation.

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[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid., p. 439.

[25] Ibid.

> The Apostles of Christ sought to ameliorate the condition of slaves, not by denouncing and excommunicating their masters, but by teaching both masters and slaves the glorious doctrines of the gospel, and enjoining upon such the discharge of their relative duties. Thus only can the Church of Christ, as such, now improve the condition of the slaves in our country.[26]

There seems to be an admission in the last sentence of the statement that the historical circumstances of 1845 made any strong advocacy by the Church for immediate abolition or ecclesiastical retribution against slave-holders all but impossible. The Assembly recognized that ". . . various opinions prevail . . ." as to the method for removing the evil of slavery but sought refuge in the principle that ". . . neither the Scriptures nor our constitution authorize [us] to present any particular course. . . ."[27]

To remove concern among some commissioners that the Assembly of 1845 had disregarded earlier pronouncements against slavery, the 1846 Assembly reaffirmed its former pronouncements especially that of

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[26] *Ibid.*

[27] *Ibid.*

1818. The concern, no doubt, stems from the Assembly's declaration advocating gradual emancipation. The resolution of 1845 passed with only thirteen commissioners voting against it, again showing the concern of the Assembly to avoid a split along sectional lines.[28] Thus the Old School Assembly reaffirmed the principle of equivocation established in 1818, placing church unity above anti-slavery concerns.

The New School General Assembly of 1850 shows the continuity of Presbyterian pronouncements on slavery and the general mood of the country for some workable compromise to the perplexing social and political divisions growing within the country. Trying to conciliate both its Northern and Southern constituency, the New School Assembly condemned the evils of slavery and then resolved that

> . . . the whole subject of slavery, as it exists in the church, be referred to the sessions and Presbyteries, to take such action thereon as in their judgement the laws of Christianity require. . .[29]

a device consistently used since 1818.

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[28] Murray, Presbyterians and the Negro, p. 106.

[29] "The General Assembly (N.S.) in 1850," cited by Robert E. Thompson, A History, p. 373.

The Old School Assembly in the same year showed its concern for divisive forces within the country by entertaining a motion by Dr. R. I. Breckenridge for the Assembly to prepare and send to the National Congress a memorial ". . . generally respecting the preservation of the national union and the Federal Constitution."[30]

In justifying the need for such a memorial Breckenridge argued that a great and calamitous crisis was impending and it ". . . would be criminal neglect of duty for the church to withhold the expression of its opinion and wishes,"[31] especially since the Presbyterian Church occupied a special position:

> extending into almost every State, and stretching over the whole country; embracing slaveholders and non-slaveholders; yet it has remained united; while other churches have failed to maintain the Union, we have succeeded. We are therefore in a position to say decidedly that the Union may be preserved. What we have done for one hundred and fifty years, [sic] may be done hereafter. Let us not dictate, but respectfully express our opinion that this great calamity which may be averted, ought to be averted, and that we look to Congress and to God to avert it.[32]

This motion was postponed by a vote of 103 to 79.[33]

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[30] "The General Assembly of 1840," Princeton Review," XXII (July, 1850), p. 441.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid., pp. 441-442.

[33] Ibid., p. 442.

It is obvious, however, that by 1850 the Presbyterians, and many other persons, foresaw the "impending crisis" and the question relating to the nature of and the desirability of the Union was beginning to be debated within the Church. The next decade saw both the New and the Old School wings split along geographical lines, thereby ending nearly forty years of moderating the force of the slavery controversy within the church.

The New School, whose Northern element was already vocal against slavery began to take a much stronger stand against the institution by 1856. This was a result of the events surrounding the settlement of the Kansas territory and the ideas of Albert Barnes whose anti-slavery position was a key factor in the ensuing debate which ultimately led to a schism between the North and the South New School elements.[34]

Thus by 1856 a major segment of the Presbyterian Church had in fact split over the slavery issue. The Southern New School formed the United synod which tried unsuccessfully to rejoin the more pro-slavery Old School wing of the Church.

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[34] Murray, Presbyterians and the Negro, p. 114.

It was to be, however, the question of Union and not slavery *per se* which was to ultimately split Old School Presbyterians.

By the time the Old School Assembly met in May of 1861, the country had already experienced its first pangs of the Civil War with the bombardment of Fort Sumpter and Lincoln's declaration on April 15th that insurrection existed. During April and May the states of Virginia, Arkansas, Tennessee, and North Carolina joined the Confederacy. Thus with the country in a state of civil war the Old School Assembly convened in an atmosphere of expressed loyalty to the Union. One reporter observed:

> Public sentiment, both in and out of the church, was almost overwhelming in favour of an open declaration of loyalty to the Constitution and the Federal Government. The eyes of the whole country were converged on the house in which the Assembly sat. The secular press was clamorous for an open avowal of allegiance. Threatening murmurs against clerical traitors were heard on every hand. Those who resisted the action of the Assembly were denounced in the streets as secessionists, as pro-slavery, as trucklers to the South, as traitors to their country.[35]

In keeping with the Church's traditional stand, the committee in charge of writing a declaration in reference to the state of the country and the position of the Church, sought a middle ground. A majority of the committee desired a general statement of the political obligation of the Church and a special day of mourning where our national sins might be confessed and bewailed. The final resolution of the majority report shows the deep-seated desire to maintain church unity in the face of national disunity and the desire to keep the Church totally apart from the ensuing political controversy. The resolution stated:

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[35] "The General Assembly of 1861," *Princeton Review*, XXXIII (July, 1861), p. 543.

> That in the present distracted state of the country, this Assembly, representing the whole Church, feels [sic] bound to abstain from any further declaration, in which all our ministers and members, faithful to the Constitution and standards of the Church, might not be able conscientiously and safely to join, and therefore, out of regard as well to the interests of our beloved country as to those of the Church, the Assembly adopt [sic] this minute as the deliverance of the Church.[36]

This resolution failed to satisfy the commissioners who had strong emotional ties to the Union and was rejected 84-128. The minority report of the committee declared in part the obligation of the Church to ". . . promote and perpetuate . . . the integrity of these United States, and to strengthen, uphold and encourage the Federal Government."[37] The resolution continued on to define "Federal Government" as:

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[36] *Ibid.*, p. 545.

> . . . that central administration, which, being at any time appointed and inaugurated according to the terms prescribed in the Constitution of the United States, is the visible representative of our national existence.[38]

Thus the Assembly removed any ambiguity as to where the loyalty of the Church now officially resided--not in party or a particular administration--but to the government in Washington prescribed by the Constitution. The report was accepted 154-66.

Thus ends the epoch of equivocation within the Church. The Southern Presbyteries of the Old School renounced allegiance to the General Assembly and joined with other synods in the South to form by the end of 1861 the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America. The split along sectional lines was now all but complete but it is interesting to note that it was not the great moral question of slavery *per se* which rent the Church but a question of political interpretation of the Constitution. In passing the minority report of the 1861 Assembly the Church decided ". . . the great political question which agitates and divides the country. . . . whether the allegiance of our citizens is primarily to the State or to the Union."[39]

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[37] *Ibid*., p. 545.

[38] *Ibid*., p. 549.

The Church since 1818 had argued that it, as a spiritual body, had no right to make pronouncements on political issues. But it is unmistakable that when the social and political passions are inflamed the moderate position of the Church will in fact be consumed.

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[39] *Ibid.*, p. 549.

CHAPTER III

THE THEOLOGICAL POSITION OF CHARLES HODGE ON THE QUESTION OF SLAVERY

The evidence thus far presented does not support a position which would directly condemn the church for its consistent equivocal stand on slavery. The church followed what it considered to be a rational and theological approach to the subject of slavery as well as an approach having the support of a majority of commissioners in the General Assembly from 1818 to 1861.

But any view which attempts to reconcile theology with so many varying economic and social considerations will not successfully rise above the secular self-interest of those who share in that view. It is, in a sense, amazing that the church was able to come to a majority stand on the subject at all. But the church's position left room for a wide assortment of interpretations.

In the systematic working out of a theological position, only one factor is constant and that is the source of all moral pronouncement: the Holy

Scripture. That such a proliferation of views existed gives evidence of the problem men face in reconciling their social context with Biblical teachings. The problem at the individual level is only a shadow of the problem confronting the church as a body attempting to form a consensus on the moral aspects of a social issue.

It is important then while considering religious attitudes toward slavery to go beyond the church's official pronouncements on slavery in order to get at least three of the major theological positions with which church members in fact identified. These positions will be represented by the theology of the Old School, Southern, and New School.

Charles Hodge of Princeton Seminary was to play an important role in forming the theological arguments which were ultimately adopted by the Presbyterian General Assembly and later those Assemblies of the Old School. Men, both North and South, looked to him for intellectual and theological guidance on the slavery issue.[1]

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[1] Andrew E. Murray, Presbyterians and The Negro--A History (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Historical Society, 1966), p. 64.

Hodge's statements on slavery span a twenty-four year period from 1836 to 1860. Although covering almost a quarter of a century his views are remarkably consistent. He does not go into a ". . . minute or extended examination of scriptural passages, . . ."[2] as we will see by contrast with Albert Barnes of the New School, because Hodge states ". . . all that we wish to assume, as to the meaning of the Word of God, is so generally admitted as to render the laboured proof of it unnecessary."[3]

But Hodge makes constant appeal to the great principle of the Gospel which holds ". . . that every man is bound to promote the moral, intellectual, and physical improvement of his fellowmen."[4] By this principle, Hodge calls to account both abolitionists and slaveholders. And it is on this principle that he establishes a middle ground on which the church painfully sat until 1861.

For Hodge the abolitionists' activity was irresponsible and unChristian, violating both reason and the principle of the Gospel. By condemning slaveholders as men-stealers and robbers, the abolitionists caused ". . . alarming exasperation at the South, injurious to the slave and dangerous to the country. . ."[5] The abolitionists' position that slaveholders are guilty of sin is, according to Hodge, clearly opposed to the testimony of Scripture. And that to pursue such an interpretation, the abolitionist cannot but weaken the authority of the Bible.[6]

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[2] Charles Hodge, "Review of Slavery" by William E. Channing, Princeton Review, VIII (April, 1836), p. 275.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., p. 302.

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[5] *Ibid.*, p. 271.

[6] Charles Hodge, Review of (a) "The Integrity of Our National Union vs. Abolitionism: An argument from the Bible, in proof of the position; that believing masters ought to be honoured and obeyed by their servants, and tolerated in, not excommunicated from, the Church of God, being part of a speech delivered before the Synod of Cincinnati on the subject of slavery, September 19 and 20, 1843," by Rev. George Junkin, D.D., President of Miami University;
(b) "The Contrast, or the Bible vs. Abolitionism: an exegetical argument," by Rev. William Graham, pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church, Oxford, Ohio, 1844;
(c) "The Rev. Dr. Junkin's Synodical Speech, in Defense of American Slavery, with an Outline of the Bible Argument Against Slavery," Cincinnati, 1844;
(d) "Line of Demarcation Between the Secular and Spiritual Kingdoms," by Rev. William Wisner, D.D., Ithaca, 1844, *Princeton Review*, XVI (October, 1844), p. 571.

Throughout his writings Hodge vigorously attacked the extreme activity of the abolitionist. By 1849, in Hodge's view, the excitement engendered by the unreasonableness of the abolitionists had produced a ". . . corresponding unreasonableness in a portion of the South."[7]

By 1860 Hodge refers to the abolitionists as a sect whose fundamental principle, that of assuming all slaveholding sinful, is anti-Scriptural and irreligious. This view of the abolitionists is shared in almost all quarters of the church and will be in varying degree a major point of contention in the position of the three men consulted in this study.

As applied to the slaveholder, the principle of the Gospel was to establish underlying principles of justice and love which would in time produce the effects of ". . . ameliorating the condition of all classes of society."[8] Thus for Hodge it was logical to state that the ". . . great duty of the South is not emancipation; but improvement."[9] But Hodge viewed the question to be not about the continuance of slavery ". . . but about the proper method of effecting the removal of the evil."[10] Thus he held that the principle of the Gospel was the proper means by which to effect an end to slavery. Hodge saw the alternatives under this scheme to be peaceful, gradual emancipation or ruinous insurrection. Only the South could choose which it was to be.

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[7] Charles Hodge, Review of "The Question of Negro Slavery and the Constitution of Kentucky," by Robert J. Breckenridge, D.D. Princeton Review, XXI (October, 1849), p. 589.

[8] Charles Hodge, "The Biblical Argument on Slavery," Cotton is King and Pro-Slavery Arguments ed. E. N. Elliott (Augusta, Georgia: Pritchard, Abbott and Loomis, 1860), p. 847.

> The South . . . has to choose between emancipation by the silent and holy influence of the Gospel, securing the evolution of the slaves to the stature and character of freemen, or to abide the issue of a long continued conflict against the laws of God. That the issue will be disastrous there can be no doubt. But whether it will come in the form of a desolating servile insurrection, or in some other shape it is not for us to say. The choice . . . is between rapidly increasing millions of human beings educated under moral and religious restraints, and attached to the soil by the proceeds of their own labor, or hordes of unenlightened barbarians. If the South deliberately keeps these millions in this state of degradation, they must prepare themselves for the natural consequences, whatever they may be.[11]

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[9] Hodge, Princeton Review, VIII, p. 301.

[10] Ibid., p. 302.

[11] Ibid., p. 304.

It is quite clear that Hodge foresaw the inevitable conflict which was to issue from the solidifying opinions in regard to slavery. The implication of his Gospel principle is far-reaching not only for the South but for the entire social order. Hodge readily admits that the testimony of Scripture does not demand the censure or excommunication of slaveholders but does stress that the great principle of the Gospel will lead ultimately to the termination of the evils of slavery. This argument is coupled with an appeal to national pride. Wherever slavery exists there is a lower form of civilization and as society advances and ". . . slaves rise in intelligence and power,"[12] slavery as an institution must disappear.

No Christian, according to Hodge, would deny his obligations received from the teaching of the Gospel to insure the improvement of his slaves. That such improvement combined with the advancement of the entire social order would lead to liberation for the slave goes without question. To perpetuate slavery the Southerner must adopt a conscious policy of keeping the slave in a state of degradation, debasement and ignorance. Such a policy is to be rejected by all Christians. "To perpetuate such a state is a direct violation of [God's] will. It is a national sin . . . and therefore will inevitably lead to national calamity."[13]

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[12] Hodge, Princeton Review, XXI, p. 605.

It would follow then that improvement based upon the principle of the Gospel will lead to emancipation and that ultimate liberation of the slaves is in fact a moral duty.[14] Apart from this moral appeal Hodge also argues the necessity of emancipation on purely social grounds. As we have already seen, the advancement of civilization, according to Hodge, demands a general rise in intelligence among all participants of the society but aside from this he argues that it is ". . . the intimate conviction of ninety-nine hundredths of the intelligent people in the United States that slavery in this country must come to an end."[15]

The choice for the South then is whether to ". . . prepare for emancipation while the evil is manageable, or have it forced upon them when every condition of the problem is a hundredfold more complicated."[16] To resist such a course and ". . . [cling] to an institution which must die" the South merely strives ". . . against [its] own best interests as well as the interest of the whole commonwealth."[17]

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[13] Ibid., p. 606.

[14] Ibid., p. 603.

[15] Ibid., p. 604.

Hodge's language is unmistakeable in its certainty of the ultimate elimination of slavery which will come peacefully, he hopes, but if not, then unfortunately by force. Although he argues for reason and is convinced that moral-truth will prevail over self-interest, he without doubt foresaw the inevitable conflict should moderation fail.

That emancipation and moral obligation have a difficult chance of winning over self-interest is clearly stated by Hodge in 1849 in a post-mortem analysis of the Kentucky Convention's failure to adopt a plan of emancipation. In spite of the caliber of men and arguments mustered for adopting a form of emancipation, self-interest, ignorance, and prejudice form proofs against which few things can prevail. It was a combination of these three items, in Hodge's opinion, that ultimately defeated the efforts of the emancipationists. "There is a natural opposition between the free whites and the slaves, both as a race and as a class."[18] At this point Hodge, no doubt, falls prey to the prevailing prejudice of his time in stating that the ". . . blacks are as a race inferior to the whites."[19] That this might not be so in the future is readily conceded. But this underlying prejudice is a main factor in the eyes of the anti-emancipationist elements. Added to this there is a strong class distinction made by laboring whites who view the free Negro as a potential challenge in the labor market.

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[16] _Ibid_.

[17] _Ibid_., p. 607.

The final factor as seen by Hodge which defeated the efforts of the emancipationists in Kentucky was the over-riding concern by non-slaveholding whites that free Negroes would be a burden to the community which would be obligated to care for them ". . . when disabled by age, sickness or dissolute habits. . . ,"[20] concerns now met by the slaveholder.

The emancipationists' plan in Kentucky was linked with the colonization in Africa of all free blacks. Such a plan effectively met the concern of non-slaveholding whites. But as we have already indicated, reason cannot easily override passion. The defeat of the emancipationist efforts in Kentucky was a blow to Hodge who saw in emancipation and colonization a fulfilling of God's design in the Christianization and democratization of Africa, and a purification of America.

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[18] _Ibid._, p. 587.

[19] _Ibid._, p. 588.

[20] _Ibid._, p. 589.

Free blacks would carry with them ". . . the seeds of religion, civilization and of liberty to an entire continent."[21] That this was God's plan, he felt, could not be disputed for God had brought the Negro to America for a period of pupillage in the highest form of civilization and religion only to return again to Africa to perform there the mission Western Europe did for America.[22] Aside from these lofty goals and participation in God's plan for Africa, Hodge appeals to the racial prejudices of the country by arguing that free blacks, if not deported, would mingle with whites, an apparent violation of natural laws ". . . which forbid the union of distinct races in the same commonwealth."[23] Such union would lead to the deterioration of both races and ". . . would fill the country with a feeble and degraded population, which must ultimately perish."[24] But if the country were to free the blacks and keep them distinct from whites, the Negro, in that he is inferior, would also sink and perish.[25] Thus it becomes imperative in Hodges' scheme not only to emancipate the Negro but for the good of the blacks, the country, and Africa, to colonize him.

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[21] Ibid., p. 596.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid., p. 594.

While championing these views as being consistent with Scriptural teachings, Hodge maintained that the church was a spiritual body and had ". . . no responsibility . . . [or] . . . right to interfere with . . . the slave laws of the South."[26] Here he is speaking of the church; as citizens, however, church members ". . . have the right and duty to demand just and equal laws . . ."[27]

But as a citizen the churchman was to remember that government was ordained of God and thus is a divine institution ". . . not a mere social compact."[28]

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[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid., p. 595.

[26] Hodge, Princeton Review, XVI, p. 581.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Charles Hodge, "The Fugitive Slave Law,"

And because it is a divine institution, men are obligated to submit to the laws of the existing government. Such obedience ". . . is a religious duty, and that disobedience is of the specific nature of sin . . . ."[29]

Whether or not God, in fact, approves of every government is not the question because God, in Hodge's view, had in fact ordained all governments. Such a view, if rigidly held, would never allow for any type of change in the society. But Hodge admits that in certain cases the law may not be binding upon the citizen. Only the individual can decide.

> It is a primary principle that the right of private judgement extends over all questions of faith and morals. No human power can come between God and the conscience.[30]

What then is the precise role of the citizen who must judge the law and at the same time be obedient to the divinely ordained government? For Hodge the law consists of two parts: the precept, the actual item forbidden or allowed, and the penalty:

> We obey the one, and submit to the other. When we are required by the law to do what

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Cotton is King and Pro-slavery Arguments, ed. E. N. Elliott, (Augusta, Georgia: Pritchard, Abbott and Loomis, 1860), p. 816.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid., p. 827.

> our conscience pronounces to be sinful, we can not obey the precept, but we are bound to submit without resistance to the penalty. We are not authorized to abrogate the law, nor forcibly to resist its execution, no matter how great its injustices or cruelty.[31]

Hodge had the fugitive slave laws specifically in mind when he wrote these views in 1860. The fugitive laws were creating an ever-increasing source of resentment and conflict between the South and Northern abolitionists.

Hodge shunned extremism and developed during his life a position which when adopted by the church ". . . stood . . . as a wall against the flood of abolitionism, which would have overwhelmed the church and riven asunder the state,"[32] while at the same time rejecting the idea that slavery was good and should be perpetuated.[33]

There are many similiarities in the position of the Presbyterian Church and that of Charles Hodge. But there were other views to be formed and championed within the church.

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[31] *Ibid*., p. 833.

[32] Hodge, *Princeton Review*, XXI, p. 586.

[33] *Ibid*., p. 585.

CHAPTER IV

THE THEOLOGICAL POSITION OF JAMES THORNWELL ON THE QUESTION OF SLAVERY

James H. Thornwell became a Presbyterian minister in 1835, one year before Charles Hodge wrote his comprehensive views on slavery in the Princeton Review. In the twenty-five years which were to follow, Thornwell became one of the leading churchmen and religious thinkers in the South. As president of South Carolina College from 1852-1855 and a professor of theology at Columbia (South Carolina) Theological Seminary from 1855 to the end of his life, he was instrumental in forming one of the major theological defenses of slavery.

In 1861 he was to be a leading voice in the creation of the Presbyterian Church of the Confederate States, as well as a vocal champion of secession. H. Shelton Smith in his analysis of Thornwell's social ideas states: "What Calhoun was to political theory in this period Thornwell was to the social ethics of the church."[1] This analysis is, in one sweeping sense, quite true. In the early 1830's Thornwell's political attitude was that of a nationalist but by the 1860's he was to champion sectional interests and the right of secession over that of the Union.

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[1] H. Shelton Smith, "The Church and the Social Order in the Old South as Interpreted by James

The contribution of James Thornwell to the religious orientation of his day was profound. "As a religious thinker, the South of his day had no greater."[2] But it was the great social issue of the day which consumed much of his energy. "Slavery," he was to say, "is implicated in every fibre of Southern society; it is with us a vital question."[3] With slavery as the over-riding factor in the social life of the South, Thornwell sought to construct a theory of the Church which would meet simultaneously the demands of politics and religion.[4]

Thornwell sought to form distinct lines between Church and State and resorted to a medieval two-kingdom theory to substantiate it.[5] The State, according to Thornwell, is a natural institution

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H. Thornwell," Church History, VII, No. 2 (June, 1938), p. 115.

[2] Ibid., p. 116.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

which is ". . . to realize the idea of justice."[6] The Church on the other hand is a spiritual body ". . . founded on the facts of redemption, and is designed to realize the idea of grace."[7] The State works for social order while the Church's function is not to push humanitarian projects or the restructuring of society but to concern itself with ". . . the invisible and inward."[8]

The complete split between Church and State is most important to Thornwell's attitude toward the institution of slavery. While recognizing the importance of slavery to the total social structure, Thornwell argued that the Church also permeates the life of the individual and thereby informs all the pursuits and relationships of man. In this manner the Church for Thornwell is able to play an important yet somewhat limited role as to the ordering of the evils of slavery.

Slavery, as are all aspects of civil, social, and political life, is subject to certain moral duties prescribed by biblical teachings. The Church in this regard must rebuke sin in all relations of life. As to slavery ". . . the Church has a right to exact the faithful performance of these duties from all her members who are masters of slaves"[9] while at the same time admonishing slaves to be faithful to their masters.

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[6] _Ibid._, p. 117.

[7] _Ibid._

[8] _Ibid._

Thornwell essentially embraces the teaching of the national church and that of Hodge in reference to master-slave relations. Thornwell believed that the slave had certain rights which were not to be violated. These included the right of equality before God; availability to knowledge, especially religious knowledge which would lead him to salvation; freedom from sexual exploitation and its corollary, the enjoyment of family life; and protection from cruel punishment. These elements merely point out the moral and rational quality of the slave, which for both Thornwell and Hodge is an important distinction for the Church to take in order to disavow the ethnological argument that the Negro is a subform of animal life and thus devoid of moral and rational qualities.

Given these qualities it follows for Thornwell, as it did for Hodge, to argue for both civil and moral obligations to insure that they are not violated. Thus the master and slave had both rights and duties in respect to his relationship to the other. These rights and duties were vested in the very nature of the slave system as a form of civil society.[10]

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[9] Ibid., p. 118.

As in all social relationships, there are fixed modes of behavior for the participants. In regard to slavery the master's rights were the duties of the slave and the rights of the slave were the duties of the master. Services of the slave rendered to the master were, according to Thornwell, his duties. Arguing from the writings of the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 4: 5-9, Thornwell states that such duties were a moral debt ". . . in the payment of which [the slave was] rendering an homage to God,"[11] and thus fulfilling a moral obligation. The right of the master then was to the labor of the slave; the duty of the slave was to fulfill this obligation free from indolence, trickery or self-will.

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[10] J. H. Thornwell, _The Rights and the Duties of Masters_. A sermon preached at the dedication of a church erected in Charleston, South Carolina, for the benefit and instruction of the coloured population. (Charleston, South Carolina: Press of Walker & James, 1850), p. 19.

[11] _Ibid_., p. 20.

Voluntary homage to the law which, according to Thornwell, is the condition and duty of the slave implies an obedience which itself can only be applied to ". . . rational, intelligent, responsible agents."[12] Therefore, as a human being the slave was to be treated by the master in full knowledge of his moral obligations to his Master in Heaven. Thus Thornwell neatly weaves the web of moral obligation around both slave and master in order to sanction their respective social roles, while at the same time placing the Church at the fulcrum, holding the scale of justice between slave and master and enforcing ". . . fidelity upon each by the awful sanctions of eternity."[13]

The obligation of the master was primarily to act in a benevolent manner, conscious of his responsibility for the spiritual salvation of his slaves. Thus it was incumbent upon the master to provide for the religious instruction of his slaves. This view of Thornwell's was in keeping with the position of the national church and was shared by Charles Hodge, but here similarity ends. Hodge viewed such instruction of slaves as leading ultimately to the extinction of the slavery system itself. Ignorance was the ground on which slavery was built and education was the mainstay of civilization's advancement which precluded slavery.

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[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid., p. 21.

Thornwell, on the other hand, saw the aim of education as that of teaching the slaves their full responsibility before God. Thus education for the slave was not to free him but to mold him in the heirarchial structure of the social order. Education, then, was to perpetuate the system, not abolish it.

The permanence of slavery is central to Thornwell's defense of that institution. As we shall see, his arguments indicate that slavery is a positive good and is, therefore, desirable for society.

We have already looked at part of Thornwell's religious defense. Religion does not exalt slaves into citizens or free men; ". . . it is to save them."[14] The effect of this salvation and prior education is not to lift the burden of slavery but to "sweeten their toil--sanctify their lives--hallow their death."[15] Religion does not move to change the social system. On the contrary, the religion of

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[14] *Ibid.*, p. 48.

[15] *Ibid.*

Christ, so argues Thornwell,

> . . . is the pillar of society, the safeguard of nations, the parent of social order, which alone has power to curb the fury of the passions, and secure to every one his rights. . . .[16]

Rights, as we have noted, are those in keeping with a person's station in the structure of society. Thornwell's view of the role of Christianity is perhaps the most insidious at this point:

> Christian knowledge inculcates contentment with our lot; and in bringing before us the tremendous realities of eternity, renders us comparatively indifferent to the inconveniences and hardships of time. It subdues those passions and prejudices, from which all real danger to the social economy springs.[17]

His concept of Christianity is one which binds men in all stations to God and thus to one another, thus negating the possibility of rash behavior such as insurrection.[18] "Christian knowledge," declares Thornwell, "softens and subdues,"[19] holding men together in confidence, fidelity and love.[20]

The slaves, he argued, are in fact free within this spiritual context. Outward earthly circumstances do not ennoble man; in fact, true slavery is slavery to sin whereas freedom was bought by Christ's blood and sealed by His Grace. Thus real emancipation is that freeing of the will from the power of sin.[21] To do work as unto God is to be a ". . . slave no longer."[22] As Thornwell interpreted the Bible, slavery ". . . could never be considered . . . repugnant to the will of God,"[23] even if abolished by general policy of the state.

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[16] _Ibid_., p. 49.

[17] _Ibid_.

[18] _Ibid_., p. 51.

[19] _Ibid_., p. 50.

[20] _Ibid_., p. 51.

Thornwell's religious defense of slavery is then two-fold. Biblical teachings and the doctrines derived from them unquestionably support the permanence of the institution. In addition the effect of Christianity, that of saving the slaves, has a practical social effect, that of subduing them. As taught by Thornwell, the extension of religious teaching among the slaves was incumbent upon all Southerners not only for the sake of the slaves' souls but also for the sake of society itself.

Thornwell did not confine himself, however, to the religious defense of slavery but also contended that slavery was not an evil but, on the contrary, was for the benefit of the entire society. To Thornwell's mind the defense of Southern slavery was similarly a defense of the ". . . civil interests of mankind."[24] The real question as seen by Thornwell was the relationship of man to society.

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[21] Ibid., p. 29.

[22] Ibid., p. 30.

[23] Smith, Church History, VII, No. 2, pp. 119-120.

> The parties in this conflict are not merely abolitionists and slaveholders--they are atheists, socialists, communists, red republicans, jacobins, on the one side, and the friends of order and regulated freedom on the other.[25]

So in 1850 when Thornwell wrote these words he translated the increasing Northern abolitionist pressures upon Southern slavery in terms that pitted not just abolitionist against slaveholder but atheist against Christian, in which the progress of humanity was at stake.[26] There is no doubt for which side the South was fighting.

Not only did Thornwell elevate the contest to one of such supreme importance but he had biting words for those who contended that slavery was sinful. Here he no doubt had the abolitionists in mind. Their argument, according to Thornwell, if fully carried out, ". . . would condemn every arrangement of society, which did not secure to all its members an absolute equality of position."[27] He thus concluded, in terms strikingly mid-twentieth century, that such an argument was based in the ". . . very spirit of socialism and communism,"[28] and would lead to nothing but social chaos.

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[24] Thornwell, The Rights and the Duties of Masters, p. 12.

[25] Ibid., p. 14.

[26] Ibid.

In furthering his argument that slavery is a positive good, Thornwell moved into the area of economics. Seeing the misery of the industrial workers in Europe and in the North Thornwell, like many Southern apologists, was quick to point out the benefits of a system of labor which looked after the temporal needs of the individual in a way not to be found elsewhere. Thornwell foresaw that unemployment was to be a great burden to society and to the worker. His solution was to provide for constant employment suitable for supporting the worker and was to be accomplished by converting the laborer into capital ". . . that is, by giving the employer a right of property in the labor of the employed; in other words slavery."[29]

As already noted, Thornwell, ten years before the Civil War, was laying the philosophical basis that the Southern cause, the defense of slavery, was a holy crusade against abolitionists and non-slave states, both having used the powers of the federal government to their own ends and having violated the Constitution, thereby breaking the contract which bound the several states in a Union.[30]

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[27] Ibid., p. 35.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Smith, Church History, VII, No. 2, p. 123.

Thornwell had no doubt as early as 1851 that these outside forces were bent upon destroying the Southern system, and he had no doubt that the South would defend itself. "The Southern states," he declared, "will not abandon their institutions. This is certain as fate."[31]

This was not meant as a prophetic statement but was merely the expression of determination shared by numerous Southern leaders during the early 1850's. But Thornwell was to keep in mind that the cause of the South was holy. The North had violated the Union; the North was the seat of atheists and communists; the North was waging a revolution upon the South.

"We are therefore fighting," declared Thornwell,

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[30] J. H. Thornwell, Southern Presbyterian Review (January, 1851), as reprinted in B. M. Palmer, Thornwell's Life and Letters (Richmond: Whittet and Shipperson, 1875), p. 576.

[31] Ibid., p. 578.

"not for ourselves alone, but . . . for the salvation of this whole continent," and the peace of the world.[32] Even a decade before the deep war, the passion of his religious commitment was unmistakably clear:

> If we are overrun, we can at least die; and if our enemies get possession of our land, we can leave it a howling desert. But, under God, we shall not fail. If we are true to Him . . . a glorious future is before us.[33]

Thornwell's religious arguments altered little by 1861 but his passion was to become more intense as he saw what he considered to be the subversion of the Constitution and the Union. The Northern approach to slavery had, in his words ". . . virtually repealed" the Constitution.[34] And the election of Lincoln sealed the triumph of those principles which undermined the basis of Union.[35]

Thornwell in "The State of the Country" forms a conclusion which culminates his entire intellectual efforts to deal with the slavery question. Given the facts of Northern usurpation of the Constitution; the spirit of atheism which underlies the abolitionist efforts; the Southern task of defending what is clearly defended by Scripture; the Southern obligation to further defend democracy and social order; and the fact that compromise is now in 1861 beyond hope, Thornwell states,

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[32] J. H. Thornwell, Our Danger and Our Duty (brochure) reprinted in Palmer, p. 583.

[33] Ibid., p. 589.

[34] J. H. Thornwell, "The State of the Country," Southern Presbyterian Review (January, 1861), reprinted in Palmer, p. 595.

[35] Ibid.

> It is becoming every day clearer that the people of the North hate slavery more than they love the Union, and they are developing this spirit in a form which must soon bring every slaveholding state within the ranks of secession. . . . The country must be divided into two people . . . we wish now to press upon the South . . . the importance of preparing, at once, for this consummation.[36]

Thornwell saw and urged the end of the Union but did so in full confidence of the ultimate triumph of the Southern states.

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[36] *Ibid.*, p. 607.

CHAPTER V

THE THEOLOGICAL POSITION OF ALBERT BARNES ON THE QUESTION OF SLAVERY

Hodge and Thornwell, both members of the Old School Presbytery until 1861, show similarity of thought especially on the items specifically agreed to and made official pronouncements by the church. They differed in that Hodge saw Christianity as the force by which slavery would ultimately be extinguished in America while Thornwell saw it as the force which gave stability to society, thus contributing to the perpetuation of the slave system. Thornwell went further afield by relating Christianity directly with the Southern cause and advocating a theocratic government for the Confederacy.

The most striking feature of these two men's thoughts is the similarity by which they developed their theological position. They both assumed the Bible to be the final arbitrator on questions of morality. But so strong was their conviction that the Bible said nothing against slavery _per se_ that neither bothered to present a Biblical exegesis to defend their position. In fact both had scathing words for those abolitionists who attempted to twist the Scripture to fit their pre-conceived ideas in regard to slavery.

It is no wonder then that Albert Barnes, an anti-slavery Presbyterian of the New School, gives us a complete exegesis of Scripture in order to counteract this tacit assumption that the Bible defended slavery. For this reason his arguments against the slavery system are in a totally different vein than those of Hodge and Thornwell.

Albert Barnes not only represents but was centrally responsible for the New School attitude toward slavery. This attitude, which has been mentioned previously, was strikingly similar to that of the Old School until 1856 when the New School took a firm position against slavery.

Barnes spent most of his professional life in Philadelphia as pastor of the First Presbyterian Church and except for a few periods of ill health and eye trouble was an active churchman both in his pastoral duties and his intellectual production. In a thirty-year span from 1827 to 1857, Barnes moved from support of colonization to support of abolition. A turning point in this development occurred around

1836 when Barnes began to question the commonly held notion that the Bible supported the slave system of the United States. The exact event which precipitated Barnes' skepticism toward popularly held theological ideas occurred in a dramatic fashion.

Sometime around 1836, Barnes encountered a fugitive slave from Maryland who was seeking help in his escape further North. Barnes, true to his religious duties as he then envisioned them, urged the man to return to his owner. In counselling the man Barnes specifically cited Paul's teaching on the subject, written in the Epistle to Philemon. This theological effort was no doubt lost on the man who parted without help and into historical oblivion. Barnes later regretted his lack of Christian response to the fugitive, but the incident proved to be the catalyst which caused Barnes to question the Scriptural defenses of slavery. This was the beginning of his intellectual pursuit which led him ultimately to write the books, Inquiry into the Scriptural Views of Slavery and The Church and Slavery.

The Inquiry, written in 1846, is a lengthy point-by-point discussion in which Barnes surveys the various arguments which he opposes, followed by an enumeration of what he considers to be their logical weaknesses, and finally a positive statement of his interpretation of what the Bible in fact said or implied on the subject of slavery. Barnes' presentation indicates a rather firm grasp of the prevailing theological thought on the subject, and an unerring understanding of who constituted his chief opponent, Charles Hodge. As already noted, Hodge's influence among Presbyterians during this period is great and Barnes in point after point attacks Hodge's thought on slavery.

Barnes begins by attacking Hodge's basic understanding of slavery. Whereas Hodge recognizes slavery to be a form of property he does not draw any evil implication from it but in fact equates it with a man's possession of property in his wife, children and livestock. The slave is only one form of property and should be treated in recognition of his being a man, not a brute, the important aspect being that property in a slave is only a claim of service either for life, or for a term of years. Barnes rejects this notion and singles out the essential element of the slave system to be property in human beings. The difference between Hodge and Barnes on the point seems to be a matter of emphasis. Hodge recognizes the property right of the owner over a slave because the slave is a human being and not a mere thing. Barnes admits that property in slaves is different from that of cattle or land but is nonetheless property ". . . made more valuable BECAUSE [the slave] is a human being . . ."[1] Barnes argues that the characteristic elements of ownership of property of any sort are applicable to ownership of slaves and, therefore, to be rejected.

Barnes argues that for the slave the relationship to his owner is an involuntary surrender of freedom which he is never able to regain. This involuntary situation extends to the slave surrendering his time, service, strength, and talent. He is never compensated for his work and is subject to be sold at his master's pleasure. Barnes' argument is essentially that man as slave, and therefore property, ceases to be, within a slave system, a human being with rights as a man to family life, citizenship and benefits of civilization.

Hodge would challenge this assumption, for in his scheme the slave is to receive these benefits. In fact the extension of civilization and moral responsibility to the slave was the means by which the slave system was to come to an end. This points out a basic difference between Hodge and Barnes. Hodge developed a theory based upon his moral convictions of what slavery should be like. Barnes attempted to deal with the system as it was in fact. This led Barnes to raise the ultimate question, ". . . whether this is a good institution, and one which God designed to commend and perpetuate."[2]

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[1] Albert Barnes, An Inquiry into the Scriptural Views of Slavery (Philadelphia: Parry and McMillan, 1846), p. 49.

The major thrust of Barnes' work attempts to demonstrate beyond any doubt that slavery is a moral wrong; in fact Barnes was to argue that ". . . it is the tendency and the design of the Christian religion, when fairly applied, to abolish the system. . . ."[3] To be sure, this does not differ from the position of Hodge; he too saw Christianity as the force which ultimately would destroy slavery. Yet Hodge was never to overtly condemn the system as a moral wrong.

The remaining part of the Inquiry is divided between an examination of the Old and the New Testament views on slavery. Barnes' treatment follows a rigid examination but his conclusions could be anticipated. Barnes argues that his idea that slavery is a moral wrong would be substantiated if in his analysis he could show:

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[2] Ibid., p. 56.

[3] Ibid., p. 57.

> . . . that slavery is an institution which God has never originated by positive enactment; that his legislation has tended from the beginning to mitigate its evils; that he has by his Providential dealings frowned upon it; that he has asserted great principles in his word, which cannot be carried out without destroying the system; that he has enjoined on man, in the various relations of life, certain duties, of which slavery prevents the performance; that slavery engenders inevitably certain bad passions, which are wholly contrary to religion.[4]

Barnes' development of his attack on slavery is a milestone in theological writings; the Inquiry caused no little amount of controversy in both North and South. On every point Barnes judged slavery to be against the teaching of Moses, the prophets, Christ, and the Apostles, against the plan of God and the spirit of Christianity. Barnes concluded from his analysis of the Jews' bondage in Egypt that if God had a method of restoring a people to freedom ". . . it would be . . . immediate emancipation."[5]

This is the first time Barnes entertained such an approach to the problem of slavery. Although Barnes was a strong anti-slavery advocate, he denounced the tendency among some clergymen to use the pulpit as a forum to attack slavery.

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[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid., p. 104.

By 1856, however, the hardening of public opinion on the slavery question made silence impossible, and the following year Barnes' second work, The Church and Slavery, appeared. The emphasis of this work was to condemn the church's tacit approval and support of the slave system.

> It is probable that slavery could not be sustained in this land if it were not for the countenance, direct and indirect, of the churches. That is, if all the churches should assume in regard to the position which the Society of Friends has done, and which some of the Scotch and German churches have done, and simply detach themselves from it, it is probable that there is not power enough out of the church to sustain the system.[6]

Barnes argued further that either the church would affect slavery or slavery would affect the church.[7] He had no confidence in the ability of the political system to mitigate the evil and bring it to an end. Reform was to be found only by the concerted effort of the churches in applying religious principles.[8] Barnes often referred to the Quakers as the best example of what the church could in fact do to rid itself and the nation of slavery. His faith that religion would bring an end to slavery lacks support considering what was taking place in his own church at the time. But his view that slavery would affect the church is well documented.

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[6] Albert Barnes, The Church and Slavery, p. 28, cited in E. Bradford Daves, Albert Barnes 1798-1810: An Exponent of New School Presbyterianism, Th.D. dissertation, Princeton Theological Seminary, 1961, p. 315.

[7] Andrew E. Murray, Presbyterians and the Negro--A History. (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Historical Society, 1966), p. 114.

Barnes moved to a condemnation of slavery by appealing to supposed threats to the Union and Democracy. The existence of slavery, he argued, threatened the continuation of the Union.[9] This appeal to nationalism parallels those arguments of James Thornwell but to a different end result. Thornwell, as will be recalled, argued that the Southern cause was in defense of Democracy which was being threatened by Northern abolitionists who were usurping the true nature of the Constitution and the Union.

Both men supported a particular culture. The pivotal issue on which their culture was to thrive or decline was whether or not slavery was allowed to continue or was abolished.

The differences between Hodge, Thornwell, and

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[8] Ibid., p. 116.

[9] Davis, Albert Barnes, p. 314.

Barnes are great. Each in his own way interpreted Scripture to support his particular cultural upbringing. The fact that Hodge and Thornwell supported a literal interpretation as opposed to Barnes' more open search for Scriptural principles—is a part of that cultural tradition which functions simultaneously in two ways. On one hand a person may examine or interpret his cultural or his social attitudes in a way consistent with his Biblical understanding or he may interpret Scripture in light of his particular social attitudes. Both functions, no doubt, are operative in a reciprocal fashion. One point, however, is clear. The clergyman will attempt--must attempt--a reconciliation between his religious and social views. And generally, the religious will reinforce the prevailing social attitudes.

Summary

It is obvious from the foregoing presentation that the national Presbyterian Church felt obliged to follow a course of action which offended the least number of its members. It can likewise be concluded that the various theological positions developed by Presbyterian spokesmen demonstrate a secular bias conforming to sectional interest, Biblical pronouncements being used to reinforce the more dominant secular attitudes. In such a situation it must be concluded that the national Presbyterian Church's attitude toward slavery was in fact broadly inclusive and, as such, did not form an antithesis against which secular attitudes might be pitted. While there is no unanimity of opinion on the national level, homogenous grouping along theological lines can be expected on a regional level in instances in which local self-interest will have the most effect, and marked deviation from the local norm most abhorred. Thus the conflict between religious and secular views on slavery must be examined in local areas where challenges to dominant social values may be best studied.

CHAPTER VI

THE EFFECT OF MIGRATION ON MISSOURI'S SOCIAL AND LEGAL VIEWS OF SLAVERY

Geographical placement of Missouri allowed the region to experience the push of westward migration, especially during the years 1810-1860. Since migration is a central factor in cultural transmission it is important to study population sources in light of Missouri's subsequent social and legal views on slavery, as well as the various changes in the prevailing social attitudes toward slavery throughout the period under consideration.

Several factors need to be considered in examining population influences in Missouri, (1) numbers; (2) state or country of origin; and (3) place of settlement.

Numbers

Around 1765 the major immigration into Missouri was French. This, however, was to change by the end of the century when the southeast part of the state was to become increasingly populated by Americans.[1] Settlers on the western frontier of the Cape Girardeau district were mainly German and German-Swiss in origin, most of them having come from North Carolina.[2] It is interesting to note that the percentage of slave population in this region declined from the year 1772. During that year slaves amounted to 40% of the total population. While no percentage of decline is cited, Jonas Viles suggests a general increase of white population during the close of the 18th century.[3] The German character of the new inhabitants may have contributed to the decline in number of slaves.

The influx of Americans during this period is, according to E. M. Violette, laid to the prohibition of slavery in the Northwest Territory. The Ordinance of 1787 checked the slaveholders from migrating to the area and diverted them into the

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[1] Henry J. Burt. The Population of Missouri, a General Survey of its Sources, Changes and Present Composition, University of Missouri College of Agriculture Experimental Station Research Bulletin No. 188 (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1933), p. 19.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Jonas Viles, "Population and Extent of Settlement in Missouri before 1804," Missouri Historical Review, V (July, 1911), p. 195.

Missouri region. This flow came primarily from Kentucky and Virginia and was, argues Violette, ". . . the beginning of that . . . stock which became . . . such a prominent element in the population of Missouri."[4]

Efforts to populate the area led the Spanish government in 1798 to ease restrictions on land titles and to encourage land-seeking settlers, especially from Virginia and Kentucky, into this region.[5] It was not until the purchase by the United States of the Louisiana Territory that American migration began in earnest.

By 1810 there were 20,845 people in Missouri,[6] of which 3,011 were slaves and 607 were free persons of color.[7] The War of 1812 and the New Madrid earthquake of 1811 retarded, for a time, immigration to the Missouri territory. The earthquake had a further effect of contributing to the redeployment of the existing population from the New Madrid area to land in the central part of the state. In spite of the war, the population increased 289.43 per cent by 1820 over the 1810 population level.[8]

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[4] E. M. Violette, "Early Settlements in Missouri," Missouri Historical Review, I (October, 1906), p. 46.

[5] Burt, Population of Missouri, p. 20.

[6] U. S. Bureau of the Census, Third Census of the United States: 1810.

[7] Burt, Population of Missouri, p. 21.

The admission of Missouri to the Union marked the major impetus to immigration in the 1820's. During the decade population grew by 110.9 per cent.[9] The slave population grew from 10,222 in 1820[10] to 25,091 in 1830.[11]

The 1840 Census again recorded a doubling of Missouri's population during the previous decade. Total population in 1840 stood at 383,702 with a slave contingency of 58,240.[12] One of the most significant differences in population make-up in 1840 was the sharp increase of free persons of color. In 1820 the number was 376, a decrease of 231 over that of 1810. In 1830 free persons of color totaled 569 while in 1840 the total was 1,574. While the level was to increase in 1850 and again in 1860, to 2,618 and 3,572 respectively, the percentage of increase was never to match that of the 1830-1840 period.[13]

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[8] Floyd C. Shoemaker, "Civil War in Northeast Missouri," Missouri Historical Review, VII (January, 1913), p. 65.

[9] U. S., Bureau of the Census, Seventh Census of the United States: 1850, p. 151.

[10] U. S., Bureau of the Census, Fourth Census of the United States: 1820.

[11] U. S., Bureau of the Census, Fifth Census of the United States: 1830, pp. 150-151.

[12] U. S., Bureau of the Census, Sixth Census of the United States: 1840. Compendium of the Enumeration of the Inhabitants and Statistics of the United States.

This increase may indicate the influence of an attempt during this decade to establish some form of emancipation in Missouri, and conversely it may have contributed to the increase in laws regulating free Negroes and mulattoes.

Population from 1840 to 1860 continued to increase but not at the same rate as before 1840. The census of 1850 and 1860 tallied a 77.7 per cent and 73.3 per cent increase respectively. Slave population by 1860 increased to 114,931 and free persons of color to 3,572.[14]

Missouri by 1860 ranked eighth among all the states in population. Shoemaker, comparing Missouri's population with that of other slave states, concluded that while Missouri was surpassed only by

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[13] Shoemaker, p. 65.

[14] Ibid.

Virginia in total population she ranked first in white population but was only eleventh in slave population.[15]

Origin

Contemporary observers and later historians have without question held that early immigration into Missouri came principally from Kentucky, Tennessee and Virginia. Unfortunately it was not until 1850 that the United States census bureau began to keep records of the place of nativity for the various states. These later records, however, do support the notion that Missouri's population did in fact stem from southern origin.

To draw the conclusion that Missouri's southern population was overwhelmingly pro-slavery is to stretch the evidence. Many southern pioneers were strongly anti-slavery and sought by coming to the old Northwest and the Missouri territory to escape from the institution of slavery.

The actual place of birth given in the 1850-

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[15] _Ibid._

[16] William O. Lynch, "The Influence of Population Movements before 1861," _Missouri Historical Review_, XVI (July, 1922), p. 506.

1860 census reports demonstrates the rapid change in the character of Missouri's social structure.[17] In 1850 Kentucky led in source of population by 24,724 over Tennessee and 28,917 over Virginia. Kentucky's contribution then of 69,694 was to swell by 1860 to 99,814, with Tennessee and Virginia again trailing with 73,594 and 53,957 respectively.

The contribution in 1850 to Missouri's population by those states that were to form the Confederacy was 112,815 and in 1860 it was 167,570. If we add to these totals those from Delaware, Maryland and Kentucky, we would have a contribution from pro-slave states of 187,280 in 1850 and 274,146 in 1860.

The most significant increase from 1850-1860 was immigration from Indiana, Illinois, Ohio, New York, Iowa and Pennsylvania. These states in 1860 contributed 138,486, as compared to 51,103 in 1850.

Foreign-born also contributed significantly to Missouri's population and its subsequent social make-up. The total foreign-born in Missouri in 1850 was 72,474 and 160,541 in 1860. The three most important sources of foreign population were in order of importance, Germany, Ireland, and England. These three alone supplied 64,465 in 1850 and 141,960 in 1860. The German migration, as we have already noted, was important throughout Missouri's history and contributed appreciably to anti-slavery sentiment. This sentiment, no doubt, was magnified in 1850-1860 when total German migration was 44,342 and 88,487 respectively.

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[17] The following statistical comparison is based on the U.S. Bureau of the Census. Seventh Census of the United States: 1850, and Eighth Census of the United States: 1860.

When a comparison is made between the total pro-slave migration and that from Indiana, Illinois, Ohio, New York, Iowa, and Pennsylvania plus foreign migration in 1850, pro-slave contribution was 63,703 more than the free state-foreign contribution. But by 1860 this situation was reversed and pro-slave contribution lagged behind by 24,881. William Lynch, commenting on this increase in Northern and foreign migration, said,

> So varied a flood of incoming settlers greatly changed the character of the population, and produced a far more complex society. This rapid change intensified the political contest of the time, and exerted a profound influence on the settlement of the problems presented by the crises of secession and war.[18]

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[18] Lynch, "The Influence of Population," p. 509.

"The new Missouri then created was seriously divided on the slavery issue and every problem related thereto."[19]

Settlement

During this early period distribution patterns of population within the state show the people from Virginia and Kentucky settling in the northern half of the state and those from Tennessee in the southern half.[20]

St. Louis, which was Missouri's principal city and was to become in this period its principal county, contained prior to the Civil War over fifty per cent foreign-born and sixteen per cent from free states. Thus two-thirds of St. Louis' population came from free territory.[21]

Missouri's ties to the South were less those of economics -- "she was not a cotton state and she did not have the plantation system in any form"[22] --

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[19] William O. Lynch, "The Westward Flow of Southern Colonists Before 1861," Journal of Southern History, IX (August, 1943), p. 319.

[20] Sceva Bright Laughlin, "Missouri Politics During the Civil War," Missouri Historical Review XXIII (April, 1929), p. 403.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid., p. 410.

than those of ". . . thought, ties of blood, and common social manners and customs."[23] But change was inevitable for such a strategically located state which was so important to the economic advance of eastern capital. This economic reality, combined with frontier conditions, transformed Missouri by 1861 into a western state,[24] and no doubt profoundly influenced her course during the Civil War.

Legal Basis of Slavery in Missouri

In contrast to the changing population of Missouri which many contemporary observers felt would bring slavery in Missouri to a peaceful end, the legal position of the state in regards to slavery remained relatively consistent throughout its slave history.

The origin of Missouri's slave laws is remarkable for it stems from the same sources as that of Missouri's early population. In 1804 the District of Louisiana was a part of the territory of Indiana whose governor and judges were empowered by Congress to pass laws for the newly acquired district. Among those laws were the first regulations of both free

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[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid.

Negroes and slaves. Considering that the slave population was less than three thousand, these laws seem far more complete and sophisticated than was perhaps needed at the time.

These laws, however, were drawn mainly from the slave laws of Virginia[25] and Kentucky, two major sources of Missouri's population. Beginning with the Code of 1804 to the more comprehensive codification of 1835, Missouri law reflects a rather stable attitude toward the slave. The fury of legislation after this period is due primarily to fear of abolitionist activity and the influence of free blacks among the slaves.

The Code of 1804 consisted of thirty-five sections which circumscribed the actions of several categories of persons such as slaves; free Negroes, mulattoes and emancipated slaves; Negroes and mulattoes, irrespective of the state of their civil liberty; and white persons. This last category was broken down into still further classifications which included owners of slaves, justices of the peace, shipowners, and white persons in a general way. Later laws were to add a few new categories but these categories themselves are important only in that they illustrate the burden of the law in its attempt to regulate the complex institution of slavery.

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[25] Harrison Anthony Trexler, Slavery in Missouri: 1804-1865. ("Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science," Vol. XXXII, No. 2; Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1914), p. 59.

There is nothing particularly remarkable about the early Missouri slave laws. In that they stem from Virginia laws they follow the general pattern of black codes in the southern states. The fact that these laws were established to regulate the civil relationships of less than three thousand slaves is due perhaps more to a quirk of history than to an actual need.

While the 1804 Code gives us the early basis for Missouri's slave laws under United States control, the first Missouri Constitution is more significant.

On the question of slavery, the 1820 Constitution placed certain limitations upon the legislature as well as enjoining them to specific types of regulation of the existing institution. The Constitution forbade the legislature from enacting any ". . . emancipation of slaves without the consent of their owner, or without paying them, before such emancipation, a full equivalent for such slaves so emancipated."[26] This section is important for it established an underlying principle which influenced subsequent efforts toward abolition of slavery. Serious emancipationist activity in Missouri always took account of this principle and sought for a gradual cessation of the institution which completely safeguarded the property rights of slave owners.

The Constitution of 1820 also provided the legislature with the authority "to prevent free negroes and mulattoes from coming to, and settling in this state, under any pretext whatsoever. . ."[27] The disavowal of this provision by the legislature was the basis for the second Missouri Compromise. As will be noted later, such disavowal was meaningless in that in 1843 and 1847 the legislature restated this prohibition to the movement of free blacks into Missouri. In addition to these provisions the Missouri Constitutional provisions also illustrate the general attitude of Missourians toward Negro slaves.

The last part of section 26 and all of section 27 deal with certain rights of slaves. In section 26 masters were told to treat slaves with humanity, a general statement to be sure, but one which reveals the idea that the slave is not a mere thing but a human being. Section 27 extended to the slave ". . . an impartial trial by jury" and insured him the same punishment as would be given to a white person who committed a similar offense.[28] So strong was the idea that slaves should be treated in a humane way that section 28 provided that a similar punishment for an offence upon a free white person be imposed upon any one ". . . who shall maliciously deprive [the slave] of life, or [limb]."[29] The significance of the latter section is important especially in light of the theological implications which are inherent in such views, as already noted in the views of Hodge and Thornwell, and Barnes.

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[26] Missouri, Constitution (1820), Art. III, section 26.

[27] Ibid., sec. 26.

The first revision of Missouri's laws occurred in 1825, at which time some additions to the slave code were made, as well as some repeals of existing laws. Most of those repealed acts were reinstated in the 1835 code which is the most complete statement of Missouri's slave laws. In fact the Black Code changes little in the remaining years of slavery in Missouri.

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[28] *Ibid.*, sec. 27.

[29] *Ibid.*, sec. 28.

This code contained four articles: (1) general regulations of slaves; (2) emancipation of slaves; (3) gifts of slaves; and (4) runaway slaves.

There are some important features of this code which should be cited. Section 29 of Article I tightened provisions dealing with assemblies of slaves. The burden of enforcement, as was common in slave codes, was upon owners and overseers. In this instance they were to insure that no more than five slaves other than their own should assemble on their plantation with or without consent of the slaves' owner.[30] Fines were levied at one dollar per slave thus assembled. In connection with such unlawful gatherings, section 33 of the same article provided a fine of ten dollars on public law enforcers for failure to suppress such meetings.[31]

Articles II and III are a mere codification of existing laws and show no significant change in previous legislation. Article IV is significant in that for the first time the law defines runaway slaves, testimony to the increased problem of fugitive slaves. "Every slave," so the law reads, "who shall be found at any place, more than twenty miles distant from plantation, lot tenement . . . without a written pass"[32] shall be considered a runaway. Those apprehending a runaway slave were to receive five dollars and ten cents a mile of the distance needed to transport such slave to the proper person.[33]

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[30] Missouri, Revised Statutes (1835), "Slaves," Art. I, sec. 29.

[31] Ibid., sec. 33.

In addition to the laws pertaining to slavery, the 1835 Code had a separate codification of laws dealing with free Negroes. The chief feature of the Code which is a significant departure from past regulations is the requiring of free Negroes and mulattoes to obtain a license to reside in any county of the state.[34] Generally the Code of 1835 attempted to tighten the existing laws, making penalties stiffer and enforcement stricter. This practice stems from a growing slave population and an increased fear of unrest among the slaves rather than from actual trouble.

In addition to the revision of the black code, the year 1835 has special significance for any understanding of Missouri's attitude toward slavery. Merkel notes that sentiment against slavery was strong enough by that year that a movement was created for gradual emancipation.[35] A petition to the state legislature reads:

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[32] Ibid., Art. IV, sec. 18.

[33] Ibid., sec. 16.

[34] Missouri, Revised Statutes (1835), "Negroes and Mulattoes," sec. 7.

> The undersigned petitioners, believing that slavery, whether considered in a moral or political point of view, is calculated to impede our onward march to distinction amongst [sic] our sister States, and that at this period a system of gradual emancipation can be commenced, which will eventually free us from the existing and growing evil, do therefore respectfully request that your honorable body proceed to amend our State Constitution, either by convention or other wise, so that all negroes and mulattoes born within the limits of this State after the first of January, 1838 or 1840, shall be free at the age of 25 or 30 years; and that the amendment be so framed as to give the Legislature power to remove them from the State at any future period; yet not affect the present generation of slaves, or any, that may be brought into the State prior to the period of time the proposed amendment to take effect.[36]
>
> October 11, 1834

A proposed constitutional convention to be held in 1835 caused general excitement, especially in the newspapers, in regard to the question of slavery.

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[35] Benjamin Merkel,"The Anti-slavery Movement in Missouri 1819-1865" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Department of History, Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri, 1939), p. 28.

[36] _Missouri Intelligencer_. Oct. 11, 1834.

The Missouri Republican and the Advocate urged that the question be discussed at length and a plan adopted for abolishing slavery in Missouri. But this attitude was not generally held. The St. Louis Argus urged that the slavery issue be left alone. The arguments for and against discussion of emancipation stem less from moral and humanitarian concerns than from economics. The Missouri Republican on April 10, 1835, commented:

> . . . we look to the convention as a happy means of relieving the state, at some future day, of an evil which is destroying all our wholesome energies, and leaving us, in morals, in enterprise and in wealth, behind the neighboring states. We mean, of course, the curse of Slavery. We are not about to make any attack upon the rights of those who at present hold this description of property: They ought to be respected to the letter. We only propose, that measures shall now be taken for the ABOLITION OF SLAVERY, at such distant period of time as may be thought expedient, and eventually for ridding the country altogether of a colored population. . . .[37]

This carefully worded statement demonstrates the circumspect way the subject of slavery had to be approached. The Republican upheld the principle of property right as outlined in the constitution, disavowed any hint of immediate emancipation, and championed colonization as the ultimate goal of any emancipation effort. At the same time the paper appealed to the economic status of Missouri in comparison to "neighboring states," no doubt referring to Illinois, and especially to Ohio. The Republican, for whatever reasons, was convinced that slavery had to be eliminated, and the forthcoming convention was the best medium by which to accomplish the task. Almost prophetically, the article concludes ". . . [this may be] the last time we shall have an opportunity of attempting it."[38]

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[37] Missouri Republican. April 10, 1835.

The St. Louis Argus responded negatively to the prompting of the Republican that the convention take up the slavery question. The Argus contended that the state's "unusual prosperity" would be checked if emigration was discouraged from coming into the state by a protracted discussion of slavery. "It will deter wealthy southern men from coming to this State so long as the stability of slave property is considered doubtful."[39] The Argus questioned the timing of such a discussion of slavery, observing that the subject would incite strong emotions, and predicted that any proposition for abolition would be defeated four or five to one.[40]

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[38] Ibid.

[39] St. Louis Argus. May 22, 1835.

Neither newspaper account by itself is complete. The year 1835 marked the waning of a national feeling that slavery could be abolished. Similarly 1835 saw the Colonization Society becoming firmly established, although not in Missouri. On the other hand, 1835 was also realizing the impact of abolitionist activity which at this time most people, North and South, rejected and condemned. That this abolitionist ferment existed in Missouri during 1835 is related by an article in the Missouri Republican on October 20. The paper's policy had been to avoid relating abolitionist activities in their columns lest it ". . . agitate the community in which we live, by awakening either its fears or prejudices."[41] The Republican viewed with fear the consequences of a planned abolitionist society convention in New York. To meet what the paper viewed as the coming crisis it urged its readers to action.

> . . . that the recent occurrences which have taken place in this city and its vicinity, and from a variety of facts, the authenticity of which is to [sic] well established to be

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[40] Ibid.

[41] Missouri Republican. Oct. 20, 1835.

> doubted, the time has arrived when the citizens of St. Louis must not only speak but act.
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> The emissaries of the abolitionist have been among our slaves, and have infected them with a spirit of insubordination which if not quelled, and at once, may, nay will, lead to most injurious and fatal consequences.[42]

The constitutional convention at which the topics of slavery and emancipation were to be discussed never materialized. In spite of this, however, the newspaper coverage clearly illustrates that Missouri's general attitude toward slavery in the year 1835 was in a transitional stage in which anti-abolitionist sentiment combined with public fear of free blacks submerged emancipationist feeling. The peak of this reaction was reached by 1847. Its expression is best illustrated by the laws of Missouri passed in the twelve-year period, 1835-1847.

So strong was the anti-abolitionist feeling by 1837 that the Missouri General Assembly passed a law dealing directly with abolitionist activity. This law provided:

> If any person shall publish, circulate, or utter by writing, speaking, or printing, any facts, arguments, reasoning, or opinions, tending directly to excite any slave or slaves, or other persons of color, in this State, to rebellion, sedition, mutiny, insurrection, or murder, with intent to excite

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[42] Ibid.

> such slave or slaves, or other persons of color, to rebellion, sedition, mutiny, insurrection or murder, such person, upon conviction thereof, shall be fined in a sum not exceeding one thousand dollars, and be imprisoned in the State penitentiary for a term not exceeding two years; and for the second offence, being thereof convicted, he shall be imprisoned in the State penitentiary for a term not exceeding twenty years; and for the third offence, being thereof convicted, he shall be imprisoned in the State penitentiary during life.[43]

In spite of this law the General Assembly felt a need to express a firm and undeniable opposition to abolitionism. On February 12, 1839, the legislature passed a resolution, proposed by Senator McDaniel of Marion County, important for its philosophical pronouncement in opposition to abolitionism. The arguments on the Union, slavery, and abolitionists expressed in this resolution are indeed similar to those views expressed by James Thornwell. No extracting can possibly demonstrate the intent of this resolution to place the consequence of continued agitation of the slavery issue squarely upon the eastern abolitionist agents; the resolution is, therefore, quoted in its entirety:

> Preamble and resolutions respecting Slavery.
> Resolved, By the General Assembly of the

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[43] _Laws of the State of Missouri_. _First session of the ninth General Assembly_. St. Louis: Chambers and Knapp, 1841.

State of Missouri; That whereas, the institution of domestic slavery, as it now exists in many of the States of this confederacy, whether or not a moral or political evil, was entailed on us by our ancestors, recognized by the constitution of the United States--the paramount law of the land,--and, by that same instrument, forming the solemn compact which binds these States together, entirely and alone left to be regulated by the domestic policy of the several States: and whereas the interference with that institution on the part of the citizens of other portions of the Union, among whom it may not be tolerated, is unconstitutional; a gross violation of the solemn compact subsisting between the States of the confederacy; officious, derogating from the dignity of the slave-holding States, and insulting to their sovereignty; well calculated to disturb their domestic peace, light up the torch, and plunge them amid the horrors of servile insurrection and war; disturb the friendly feeling and intercourse, which should ever subsist between the several States of the confederacy, and ultimately destroy their union, peace and happiness; and whereas we have long viewed with feelings of deep regret the disposition continually fostered and promoted by the citizens of many of the States of this Union, wantonly to intermeddle with such institution, as manifested by numerous disorganizing and insurrectionary movements; and have as fondly anticipated that the evil tendency of such a course of policy must long ere this have been seen and desisted from; but in these reasonable expectations, and calculations upon the sober sense and patriotism of our eastern brethren, we have been very disagreeably disappointed; Therefore the southern and southwestern States, in these numerous and continued acts of insult to their sovereignty, are admonished in language too plain to be misunderstood, that the dreadful crisis is actually approaching, when each of them must look out means adequate to its own protection, poise itself upon its reserved rights, and prepare for defending its domestic institutions from wanton invasion, whether from foreign or domestic enemies, "peaceably if they can, forcibly, if they must:"

1. Resolved, That since the Constitution of the United States has no where deprived the States from regulating domestic slavery, that institution therefore is plainly and expressly left to the regulation and control of their domestic policy, and forms one among the most important features of their reserved rights.

2. Resolved, That the interference with such institution, on the part of the citizens of other portions of the Union where it does not exist, is in direct contravention of the constitution of the United States and the solemn compact subsisting between the members of this confederacy, derogatory from the dignity of the slave holding States, grossly insulting to their sovereignty and ultimately tending to destroy the union, peace and happiness of these confederated States.

3. Resolved, That we approve the course of Representatives in the Congress of the United States, for their able and manly defence of the domestic institutions of the Southern and Southwestern States, and for their uncompromising opposition to the wanton encroachments now attempting to be made upon them.

4. Resolved, That we view the active agents in this country in their nefarious schemes to subvert the fundamental principles of this government, in no other light than as the mere tools of a set of arch machinators, who envy the prosperity of these confederated [sic] States, and desire to effect by management, what, they cannot do through force of arms--the destruction of our domestic peace and the reign of equal laws.

5. Resolved, That we can see in these numerous acts of aggression and interference with the domestic institutions of the southern and southwestern States, nothing but wanton invasion of their reserved rights, and contemtuous [sic] insult to their dignity as sovereign and independent States; and that they have no other safe alternative left them but to adopt some efficient policy by which their domestic institutions may be protected and their peace, happiness and prosperity secured.

6. Resolved, That copies of this preamble and these resolutions be printed, and the Governor be requested to transmit a copy of

> them to the governor of each of the States
> of this Union, and one to each of the members
> in the Congress of the United States.[44]
> APPROVED, Feb. 12, 1839.

These legislative acts clearly demonstrate the intensity of abolitionist activity in slave areas, if not in fact, at least in the minds of the people.

To frustrate slaves seeking freedom in free territory the Missouri General Assembly in 1841 extended further restrictions on the transportation of slaves. This act, passed February 13, prohibited the intra-state transportation of slaves, the fine for such shipment being the value of the slave. With the major waterways of Missouri passing through or on its territory the chance for a slave's escaping was great.

As previously noted, the slave code remained the same after 1835; however, the laws governing free blacks underwent several changes. These changes stem from the fear of the free blacks' numerical increase and their activity among the slaves. The actual free black population during this period, as mentioned, was small. Their importance in creating slave unrest is not documented to the extent of warranting the laws which passed the Missouri legislature in the 1840's.

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[44] Laws of the state of Missouri passed at the first session of the twelfth General Assembly. pp. 337-338.

Fear, however, has its own rationale; none other is needed.

The first major law passed after 1835 was in 1843 when the General Assembly of Missouri passed a law attempting to restrict the immigration of free Negroes into the state. This law was not, however, as inclusive as the one passed February 16, 1847, which provided in section four that "No free Negro or mulatto shall, under any pretext, emigrate to this state, from any other State or territory."[45] The language of this section is markedly similar to that of the Missouri Constitution which precipitated the debate leading to the Second Missouri Compromise. Thus from 1835 to 1847 Missouri law makers saw fit to first restrict residence of free Negroes within the state, then to restrict their entrance into the state, and then to directly and unequivocably prohibit their immigration.

Abolitionist activity was, no doubt, the central cause for this alarm. Although the actual percentage of free blacks increased sharply, their actual number remained relatively small and presented no real threat. Added to the fear of abolitionist activity the presence of free blacks posed a special concern for whites who desired, therefore, to control their movement and activities. Thus the zeal of anti-abolitionist activity extended beyond necessary requirements, especially in these laws pertaining to free blacks.

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[45] Laws of the state of Missouri passed at the Regular session of the fourteenth General Assembly. p. 104.

The 1847 law had several other provisions which demonstrate its anti-abolitionist character. The first section of this act was designed to nullify the effect of abolitionist literature which was getting into the hands of literate slaves. The provision provided that "no person shall establish or teach any school for the instruction of Negroes, or mulattoes reading or writing, in this State."[46] This provision violated one of the basic positions of the national Presbyterian Church. Such legislative action undermined the basis of civilization and humane treatment of Negroes, and thereby reduced the slave to a state of ignorance; so strong was the passion against the abolitionist. Fortunately for Missouri this provision was violated both by churches and individuals, often at their own risk.

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[46] Ibid., p. 103.

The 1847 act also extended further control over all assemblage of Negroes and mulattoes who were now to be inspected by a law officer to insure that no unlawful activity occurred.[47] Thus by 1847 the General Assembly had enacted, in response to increased activity by abolitionists, a comprehensive set of regulations for control of slaves, abolitionists and free blacks.

Laws enacted on the slavery question from 1847 to the end of the slave era in Missouri were largely a matter of revising certain details within the law such as to increase a fine or term of imprisonment. It would be fair to say that Missouri slave code in its general substantive matter was all but complete by 1825 and certainly completed by 1835. Laws regulating abolitionists and free blacks were most prominent from 1835 to 1847.

An attempt was made, but failed, in 1855 to revise the code relating to free Negroes.[48] In 1859 feeling against free blacks was still running high and an attempt was made to pass a bill which ". . .

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[47] Ibid., p. 104.

[48] E. M. Violette. "The Black Code in Missouri," Proceedings of the Mississippi Valley Historical Association, VI (1912-1913), p. 314.

provided that every free Negro and mulatto arrested for some crime or misdemeanor should be considered as having migrated into the state since 1847,"[49] (the date of prohibition of such migration) unless he could prove it to the contrary. The bill was vetoed, but Governor Stewart urged the legislature to vigorously pursue prohibition of free blacks into the state.[50]

While there were many attempts to change the Missouri Constitution it remained essentially the same from 1820 to the convention of 1861-63. In respect to slavery, the convention, which was conducting a provisional government as well, abolished legislative control over slavery in 1863 and provided for a gradual emancipation of slaves in Missouri. The time, however, had passed for gradual emancipation. The only course open during the war years was immediate emancipation of slaves which finally was accomplished in Missouri in 1865.

Missouri's attitude toward slavery at any given point in time is complex, embracing a wide spectrum of opinion, but a general attitude seems to emerge. Missourians were less for slavery as an institution than they were for protecting their property and Constitutional rights. This produced a sympathetic advocation of gradual emancipation. The specific form of such gradual emancipation was never to be determined but no doubt Missourians would liked to have seen the black population removed entirely from the state.

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[49] Ibid., p. 315.

[50] Ibid.

During the 1835-1847 period, passion aroused by abolitionist activity and fear of insurrection, fostered by the agitation of abolitionists and free blacks, dissipated emancipation efforts. The activities of anti-abolitionists had the reciprocal effect of projecting the abolitionist activity to that of a holy crusade, both in a moral and political sense.

CHAPTER VII

CLERGY-LAITY CONFRONTATION ON THE QUESTION OF ABOLITION IN MARION COUNTY, MISSOURI 1835-1845

Marion County, located on the Mississippi River 115 miles northeast of St. Louis, has contributed much to the literature and legend of the West. Through Mark Twain of Hannibal (a principal city of Marion County) William Muldrow, land speculator, fortune seeker, and backer of Marion College, reached legendary status as Colonel Seller. Similarly, Marion City, one of Muldrow's grandiose schemes, found an immortal place as Eden in Charles Dickens' novel, Martin Chuzzlewit. In addition to its literary contribution Marion County played an important role in the conflict over slavery.

During the period 1835-1845, the county became a caldron in which abolitionist and anti-abolitionist attitudes reached intense heat. The development of this conflict in Marion stems in part from the activities of William Muldrow and especially from those of the Reverend David Nelson.

Marion College and the "Eastern Run," the Activities of William Muldrow

Muldrow, a man of little education but with a sixth sense for making money and selling ideas to others, conceived of Marion City, the first of a series of towns linked by rail that was to extend to the Pacific Ocean. The scheme was better on paper than in reality, yet Muldrow was able to encourage both large-scale investments in the project as well as sizeable migration to the proposed site of Marion City. The movement of people to Marion City occurred in the summer and fall of 1836, coming mostly from Pennsylvania, Ohio and other Eastern and Northern states. The local people viewed this "Eastern Run" with chagrin, for it brought into Missouri people of anti-slavery sentiment as well as active abolitionists. Occurring as it did during a period of increased bitterness toward abolitionism, the "Eastern Run" intensified attitudes beyond rational levels and produced a highly explosive situation.

Related to the Marion City scheme was the founding of Marion College by the Reverend David Nelson, who has been called the founder of Presbyterianism in Northeast Missouri.[1] Marion College was not a direct part of Muldrow's scheme but Muldrow was a promoter of the college and a member of its board of trustees.[2]

No doubt the success of a college in Marion would encourage more investment in and immigration to Marion City. In fact it is interesting to note that a reorganization of the college occurred in 1835 at the time of Muldrow's promotion of Marion City. The college had a sizeable reputation and was considered to be an Oxford or Cambridge of the West. Indeed, the college did attract reputable men of learning from the East, such as Dr. Ezra S. Elys of Philadelphia.

David Nelson, the founder of the college, was a Southerner by birth, born in Jonesbourgh, Tennessee, September 24, 1793.[3] In 1809 after finishing his college work at Washington College, Nelson began medical training under Dr. Ephraim McDowell in Danville, Kentucky, and finished in 1812 after studying a year in Philadelphia.[4]

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[1] "Historical Sketch of the Presbyterian Church in Palmyra, Missouri," The Missouri Presbyterian Recorder, I (September, 1855), p. 135.

[2] Catalogue of the Officers and Students of Marion College, Missouri 1835-36. Benton MSS, Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis, Missouri. (The Society will hereafter be referred to as M.H.S.)

[3] W. B. Sprague (ed.) Annals of the American Pulpit, Vol. IV (New York: Robert Carter and Bros., 1858), p. 677. (Hereafter referred to as AAP).

It was at this time that Nelson, age 19, joined a Kentucky regiment as an assistant surgeon and served in the War of 1812. This Army connection plus his studies [illegible] medicine and as he expressed it, his exposure to the "French Philosophy"[5] led him on a path of infidelity until several years after his marriage.

His subsequent conversion to religion caused him to pursue the ministry, serving for a number of years in Western Kentucky in a Presbyterian Church. Nelson was a well-liked man, big and powerful in appearance. He followed the camp meeting style of evangelism and was said to be highly successful. Many newspapers in Missouri announced the attendance of Nelson at many camp meetings in Missouri as well as Kentucky. His preaching activities were instrumental in leading many to a religious life. In addition to his religious interest Nelson was also the agent in Kentucky for the American Education Society. This interest in education was central in Nelson's move to Missouri in 1830 and the founding of Marion College.

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[4] *Ibid*.

[5] David Nelson. *Cause and Cure of Infidelity*. (New York: American Tract Society, 1841), p. 221.

The motivation for establishing Marion College has been questioned by Albert Whitaker, who has suggested that the founding of the College was a result of anti-Jesuit feeling among American protestants.[6] There may be some validity to this assertion. The Catholic Church had in fact established a college in St. Louis in 1818 and the Jesuit Order was active in Missouri as early as 1823 when they established a seminary and Indian school.

The occurrence of Marion College a decade after Missouri became a state reflects the increased concern of Presbyterians in the West. The fact that Catholic schools were the first to be established in Missouri suggests only the previous cultural attachment of the area before its becoming a part of the United States. This is not to say that no anti-Catholic or anti-Jesuit feeling existed. On the contrary, judging from the writings of other Presbyterian clergymen, the feeling toward Catholics among the clergy in Missouri was not altogether genial. It would be difficult, however, to ascribe this as a motive for Nelson's move to Missouri and his subsequent founding of the College. Rather than anti-Catholic feeling his motives stem more from his being a Western man who sensed the importance of the nation's westward push and saw the need for learned men and especially a learned clergy.

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[6] Albert P. Whitaker, "Marion College and Marion City--Missouri Enterprises of Fifty Years Ago," _Magazine of Western History_, IV, No. 6 (October, 1886), p. 798.

The question remains, however, why a man of emancipation sentiment would move to a slave state. Reverend J. J. Marks suggests that the general feeling in the West in the late 1820's and early 30's was that slavery was ebbing in Missouri and a general policy of emancipation was only a question of time.[7]

This seems to fit the general pattern of slavery sentiment discussed in the last chapter and suggests that Nelson did not move to Missouri to campaign for abolition but had assumed that slavery was dying.

Seeing that emancipation in Missouri was not to be accomplished, Nelson by 1835 reached a point of firm determination in his reaction to slavery. William Potts, a Presbyterian minister in St. Louis, indicated that by this year Nelson resolved not ". . . to sit at the communion table with those who held slaves."[8]

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[7] J. J. Marks, "Personal Remembrance of Reverend David Nelson," Minutes of the Synod of Missouri of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., 1917.

Elijah Lovejoy, editor of the St. Louis Observor, mentions a letter which Nelson had written to Missouri's clergy on April 16, 1835 and published in the Observor.[9] This issue of the paper is no longer available but it is safe to say the letter was the same one which was reprinted in 1837 and given national circulation to the Presbyterian clergy.

This letter established two principles upon which Nelson's argument against slavery rested. The first principle is stated clearly:

> The participator in crime is a criminal. . . . The accessary in the view of heaven is a principal. Standing near where crime is acted, I participate, . . . IF I PREVENT NOT where my ability reaches.[10]

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[8] William S. Potts, "David Nelson," in Sprague, AAP, p. 686.

[9] Joseph C. and Owen Lovejoy, Memoir of Reverend Elijah P. Lovejoy (New York: John A. Taylor, 1838), p. 122.

[10] David Nelson, To the Presbyterian Clergy of the United States, 1837. p. 3 (No publisher or copyright date given).

The second principle is arrived at in a rather circuitous fashion. Nelson argues that sin is to be halted immediately upon realizing the transgression. ". . . I am not aware," he states, "of any permit from the Holy One which authorizes the gradual cessation from that which his soul hateth. . ."[11] He moves then to implicate all who owned slaves as encouraging the system itself, " [the slave holder] encourage[s] all the naturally attendant sins; and the sins. . . [therefore] . . . belong to us!"[12] According to Nelson, the only righteous persons would be those who, while not owning slaves themselves, dissociate themselves from the system and speak out against it.

Marion College was the fruit of Nelson's efforts and was a focal point of much controversy over abolition. Throughout its brief history, the College was closely associated with the Presbyterian Church. As already noted it was founded in 1830 and chartered by the state of Missouri in 1831. A major reorganization came in 1835, for which a number of reasons may be cited. Nelson, as the first teacher and president of the college, was absent a lot from the school, travelling, preaching and lecturing. Thus there was a need for a more elaborate structure for the school and a more stable academic environment. In addition the college, from its inception, was in financial troubles which necessitated Nelson, Muldrow and Dr. Clark, a teacher and one of its main backers, personally borrowing $20,000 in order to keep it going.

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[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid., p. 5.

The source of this money was mistakenly believed by citizens of Marion County to have come from Arthur Tappan, a noted Eastern abolitionist. Thus the abolitionist connection of the college was already firmly established in the minds of the people, an attitude not discouraged by the opinions of David Nelson. The difficulty of getting financial aid was made none too easy by the threat of physical harm to the school and its personnel by the pro-slavery faction in Marion.

The reorganization salvaged the school for a time. The promotion for funds and students drew students from many Eastern states. The 1835 catalogue of the school showed that of the eighty students, thirty-seven came from the states of Pennsylvania, New York, Ohio, Massachusetts, Connecticut and Illinois, the largest contingent coming from Pennsylvania and New York, each having thirteen students. Of the remaining forty-three students, twenty-eight were from Missouri and most of these were from areas of the state North of the Missouri River. Other states represented included Kentucky, Virginia, Tennessee, Maryland and Louisiana.[13]

The heavy enrollment for the East further supported the popular notion in Marion County that the college was in the hands of Eastern abolitionists. This attitude is most interesting for, if anything, the officials of the school and the Presbyterian Church in Missouri were attempting in 1835 to shake the abolitionist stigma. This partially explains the reorganization of the school at that time.

Under this reorganization William S. Potts of St. Louis was made president of the college. A man of great learning and held in high respect by all, his selection may very well have been a key factor in stemming the unpopular attitude toward the college. Potts was inaugurated president of the college September 17, 1835. His address to the trustees gives little hint of any difficulty between the college and anti-abolitionists. In fact his speech elaborates in a rather general fashion on the importance of education. He did touch upon what he considered to be the relationship of teaching to morals:

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[13] Catalogue of Marion College.

> The duty of respecting the rights of others, and exercising a control over ourselves, has its sanction in the relation we sustain to God, and our duty to him.[14]

Potts uses this statement to insure that the purpose of the college is theological education which by its nature will establish the proper relationship between man and God and then between man and man.

In spite of the reorganization, a letter in the Missouri Argus on September 25, 1835, and signed "Hampden" raises the question as to why the declining college should be invigorated. The editorial comment to this inquiry indicates that Potts' inauguration had not been widely publicized but also indicates the general public opinion toward Potts.

> We think it but just to remark, . . . that it is generally understood that the Rev. Potts of this city will take charge of that institution some time in the fall, and we fully believe that so far as his influence and power are concerned as President of the College, nothing improper literary, religious, or political, need be apprehended. He is a

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[14] William S. Potts, The Inaugural Address of Rev. William S. Potts, President of Marion College (St. Louis: R. M. Treadway, 1835), p. 14.

> man of education, of a mild disposition, and of enlarged, and liberal principles.[15]

Coming from an anti-abolition newspaper these remarks give some idea as to the new direction of the school.

The ill feeling toward the college was not to die quickly though. The Missouri Courier on October 24 called upon the college to deny abolitionist connections as charged by other newspapers in Missouri.[16] The Courier generally believed that the trustees of the college were against abolition but still suspected members of the faculty of being abolitionists. On November 21, the newspaper states that the trustees had prohibited a Professor Samual McConnell from teaching abolitionist doctrine.

This action by the trustees is collaborated by a letter in the Missouri Argus signed only "a slaveholder." While not specifically naming McConnell the writer states, ". . . that the trustees of Marion College prohibit[ed] the discussion of the Slavery question."[17] In the writer's defense of the college and his attempt to disavow anti-slavery connections he concluded by glorifying ". . . the character and qualifications of the able and pious President of that Institution, Rev. William S. Potts."[18]

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[15] Missouri Argus. September 25, 1835.

[16] Missouri Courier. October 24, 1835.

[17] Missouri Argus. October 30, 1835.

Sampson Asbury concludes that once Potts ascended to the Presidency ". . . the College passed under pro-slavery influences."[19] This judgement may be premature in 1835 but certainly after the events of 1836, which will be discussed later, the college's stand attempted to mediate more than ever the differences between the college, Presbyterians, and the slaveholders.

Lovejoy in an indirect fashion sheds more light on the general attitude of William S. Potts on the slavery question. Potts had been one of the men to have encouraged Lovejoy's editorship of the St. Louis Observor. On October 5, 1835, shortly after Potts became President of Marion and just before the synod meeting on the 17th a letter was received by Lovejoy suggesting a new editorial policy which would ". . . pass over in silence every thing [sic] connected with the subject of slavery."[20]

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[18] Ibid.

[19] Sampson F. Asbury, "Marion College and its Founders," Missouri Historical Review, XX (July, 1926), p. 187.

In all fairness to the writers of this letter, which included Archibald Gamble, Nathan Ramsey, William S. Potts and others, it must be said that they expressed a concern for the threats against the Observor and perhaps against Lovejoy himself. This letter is mentioned in that it seems to indicate the tenor of mind among many Presbyterians, especially that of William Potts. Both this letter and the subsequent prohibition against discussion of the slavery question at Marion College indicate an effort to forestall any violent action in the community. The concern of Potts and, as we shall see, the synod action of 1835 seems to be with protecting physical property as well as with insuring a peaceful community. This attitude is, without question, an antithesis of those principles expressed by David Nelson.

On October 17, 1835, the Presbyterian synod of Missouri, meeting in Marion County, felt obligated to make a comprehensive statement in reference to slavery because of the generally held idea connecting the church and abolition. Merkel holds that the synod action is in keeping with the general sentiment during that period for gradual emancipation.[21] Elijah Lovejoy, however, suggests that the resolution of the synod was made from fear that the linking in the public mind of abolitionists and Presbyterians would spell the death of Presbyterians in Missouri.[22] This in itself supports the thesis that sacred attitudes will succumb to secular influences.

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[20] Lovejoy, p. 137.

Lovejoy mentions a "St. Louis elder" at the meeting who believed that slavery had the sanction of Holy Scripture and who made a tremendous fuss over the abolitionist activities in Missouri. Lovejoy who was a delegate at the meeting relates the background of the resolutions:

> We had a warm debate; a majority of the ministers went with me, but the lay members turned the scale. Two ministers from New England voted against us. . . . Eastern men when they go over constitute the most ultra defenders of slavery.[23]

It is not known what alternate proposals were before the synod. But the fact that the laymen carried the day over the disapproval of Lovejoy whose views on abolition and slavery were a constant source of irritation in St. Louis would certainly support the contention that the church as of 1835 was taking a view in keeping with the majority of the community.

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[21] Benjamin Merkel. The Anti-slavery Movement in Missouri 1819-1865 (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Department of History, Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri, 1939). p. 59.

[22] Lovejoy, p. 161.

[23] *Ibid*., p. 162.

The preamble of the resolutions makes it quite clear that the purpose of the statement was to correct the ". . . various unfounded and injurious reports . . . in circulation respecting the views of the Presbyterian Church in the State of Missouri on [slavery] . . ."[24]

The synod in a forthright statement condemned slavery as a great evil, but the language from that point on begins to equivocate the means to bring its end. Slavery, the resolution states, ". . . should be removed as soon as the interests of all concerned will permit."[25] Perhaps this equivocation is justified, for Missourians at the time of its writing still looked for a constitutional convention to discuss means of ending slavery. The synod continued by condemning abolitionists and their goal of immediate emancipation which they felt would be ruinous to the country and to the slave himself. The final resolution encouraged slaveholders ". . . to give their slaves that moral and religious instruction which is best calculated to promote the present and future happiness of both master and slave."[26] This resolution is in keeping with the national church's position but in view of Thornwell's and Hodge's attitudes toward instruction and its ultimate effect, the statement is hollow of specific intent. The synod, as Merkel contends, was responsive to the general attitude of the times. They condemned slavery and abolition while supporting gradual emancipation, and moral and religious instruction while not mentioning reading and other preparation for ultimate freedom.

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[24] Missouri Argus, October 30, 1835.

[25] Ibid.

The Crisis Year: 1836

The college, the "Eastern Run," the abolitionist and pro-slavery sentiment finally converged in the early part of 1836 in what was to be an exciting and dramatic confrontation.

In May of 1836 two men referred to in historical accounts only as Williams and Garret came to

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[26] *Ibid.*

Marion County as part of the "Eastern Run."[27] Abolitionist tracts were found in their baggage and it was generally assumed that these men were agents of the American Colonization Society.[28] Williams and Garret took up residence in the town of Philadelphia which was situated within a mile of Marion College. The events which followed their arrival show without question the emotional excess of anti-abolitionist sentiment during this period.

A mob of fifty persons assembled in Palmyra and were ". . . determined to visit the neighbourhood and clear out the abolitionists."[29] What exactly happened is somewhat unclear. The mob took Garret prisoner and proceeded to Dr. Nelson's home, looking for the tracts which Garret claimed were in Nelson's possession. Garret finally confessed that the documents were in fact hidden at his own house. The mob, going between Garret's home and that of Nelson, had to pass through the campus of the college. On their return from Reverend Nelson's the mob captured a student who, according to Thomas Hart Benton, Jr., was also an abolitionist and ". . . was abusing them at the time."[30]

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[27] E. F. Perkins, History of Marion County, Missouri (St. Louis: Nixon-Jones Co., 1884), p. 203.

[28] Ibid.

[29] A letter by Thomas H. Benton, Jr., to Samual Benton, July 20, 1836, Benton MSS, M.H.S.

At this point accounts differ. Benton contends that Garret and the student were merely lectured by the mob. E. M. Perkins in the History of Marion County states that the mob had by this time taken Williams prisoner also and gave the captives the choice of leaving the state or of hanging. No further mention is made of the student but he no doubt chose, along with Williams and Garret to leave the state.[31]

The tracts which were confiscated by the mob were taken to Palmyra and ". . . with some ceremony" burned. Perkins states that, "the *auto da fe* of the 'abolition pamphlets' was witnessed by quite a concourse of the best citizens, who enthusiastically approved what was done."[32]

The actual approval for these acts, however, came the following night at a public meeting where a series of resolutions in reference to slavery were passed. The preamble to the resolutions demonstrates in a clear way the general tenor of Marion County feelings toward abolitionism. Citizens of Marion were convinced that their county had been selected by the Eastern abolitionists to promote their activities.[33]

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[30] *Ibid.*

[31] Perkins, p. 204.

[32] *Ibid.*

This attitude stems from the impact of the "Eastern Run." The objectives of the abolitionists were viewed by the angered citizens as ". . . incompatible with the peace, happiness, and security of our citizens, as members of a slaveholding community"[34] There was also a general feeling that existing laws furnished no protection from such abolitionist activity and, therefore, the "evil must be met with energetic uncompromising hostility."[35]

The specific resolutions condoned the actions taken the night before toward Garret and Williams. The resolutions also stated in principle that the people of Marion must, for self-protection, determine ". . . to watch with vigilance, and oppose with vigor, the introduction and dissemination of abolition principles . . ."[36] in the county. The citizens called also upon the next state legislature to examine the situation but pledged that until the legislature acted, the citizens themselves would take vigorous action. No specific organization for action was put forth and the resolutions seemed to stem from anger and hostility; they fall far short in the practical safe-guarding of the community from abolitionist activity.

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[33] Missouri Republican, May 31, 1836.

[34] Ibid. [35] Ibid. [36] Ibid.

What followed at the public meeting demonstrates that in the public mind the college was an unmistakable part of the abolitionist plan. This stems from the fact that Nelson and Muldrow and many other persons associated with the college were either outspoken abolitionists or colonizationists. Because most were Presbyterians, the public came to link all abolitionist activity to Presbyterians and specifically to the college. In fact the situation was concisely stated that in Northeast Missouri ". . . a Presbyterian was almost in as bad odor as an abolitionist."[37]

This situation prompted many supporters of the college to do some public relations work at the public meeting. Dr. Elys was asked to speak to rectify this mistaken public idea toward the college. Elys personally disavowed all connections with Northern abolitionists and asserted that he himself owned a slave at that very moment. Elys' profession was in fact true. His ownership of a male slave, however, stemmed from his desire to keep the man from being shipped down the river and thus separated from his wife. But it was important for Elys to stem the high feeling toward the college for he had invested heavily in its success, both professionally and financially.

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[37] Perkins, p. 208.

After Elys, John Roach, teacher of Latin and Greek languages at the college, read certain laws passed by the faculty on the afternoon before the public meeting. It is interesting to note that Roach was also part of the committee which drew up the resolutions previously mentioned.

The faculty action consisted of a preamble and five specific prohibitions. The preamble is most enlightening as to the general disposition of the college faculty:

> The faculty of Marion College utterly disapprove, as unchristian and illegal, the circulation of all books, pamphlets and papers, calculated to render the slave population of this state discontented and restless-- . . . [and] condemn[s] any interference with the rights guaranteed by

> the laws of Missouri, to the owners of slaves.[38]

Five areas were enumerated which were considered to be ". . . fit subjects of discipline." The prohibitions included (1) talking with slaves in order to make them discontent; (2) circulating pamphlets which incite blacks; (3) holding integrated meetings where slavery was discussed; (4) teaching slaves to read without owner's permission; (5) discussing and holding public meetings among students, ". . . upon the subject of domestic slavery.[39]

The exact reason for this faculty action is uncertain. It may be surmised, however, that the faculty was interested in placating the local residents, especially at this particular time. Also they were concerned for the safety of their students, fearing worse things than a mere lecturing. More will be said later on the attitude of the college toward slavery.

After hearing the report of Mr. Roach, the public meeting was said to have dispersed with everyone fairly pleased with the results. But if there was any moment of ebbing motion it was short-lived. The events of the following Sunday, May 22, furnished the capstone to this series of emotion-laden events.

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[38] Missouri Republican, May 31, 1836.

[39] Ibid.

Reverend Nelson, who had earlier in the year planned to move to Illinois, was conducting a camp meeting in Union township on the occasion of his farewell sermon to the Greenville Church which he had been serving. Upon completion of his sermon William Muldrow asked him to read a paper on the subject of colonization. Thomas Benton, Jr., who was an eye-witness of the events said it was ". . . a subscription paper, for the purpose of geting [sic] money for colonizing the free blacks. . . ."[40] Why Nelson and Muldrow indulged themselves in colonizationist rhetoric at a time of intensive feeling against it is not difficult to understand. It is clear that Nelson refused to condone by his silence the acts of the preceding days by the pro-slavery group in Marion. His action would be a logical extension of his views expressed in the Observor.

The paper engendered an angry protest from a Dr. John Bosley who was armed with two pistols and a sword cane.[41] One account relates that Bosley attempted to shoot Nelson but due to the foresight of Bosley's wife, who unloaded his pistols the night before, murder was averted. Benton, however, says that Bosley approached only Muldrow and began arguing about the paper which had been read. As tempers flared Muldrow stabbed Bosley with a pocket knife. Bosley was thought dead and was reported as such in the Missouri Republican of May 31. Bosley, in fact, was merely wounded. Muldrow later was acquitted, having pleaded self-defense.

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[40] A letter by Thomas H. Benton, Jr., to Samual Benton.

After the stabbing a riot ensued and the spirit of hatred and not love and repentance was the order of the day at the Union township camp meeting.

Nelson fled from the area and was concealed by his friends who urged him to escape to Illinois. He at first refused to go but then deferred to their pleadings. While hidden along the banks of the Mississippi awaiting an opportune time to cross, Nelson finalized in his mind the structure of a book which when finished was considered to be one of the finest books at that time in American religious writing.

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[41] Ibid.; also Perkins, p. 205.

The Cause and Cure of Infidelity was, no doubt, long in formulation, stemming from Nelson's own religious quest, especially while he was a medical doctor in Kentucky. But the events of May, 1836, gave this formulation the catalyst which impelled him to feverishly complete the manuscript in the summer of 1836.

It is strange that Benton, who was a student at the college and close to the president, William Potts, fails to mention that Nelson left Missouri. The exact time of his departure is not clear but William McPheeters in a letter to his daughter on 12 June, 1836, said,

> . . . the Rev. D. Nelson I believe has gon [sic] to Illinois. I think he ought not to have gon [sic], the spirit of mobism has rose sic very high, it is a bad way of doing buisness [sic], . . .[42]

Mobism has its own behavior, and Nelson probably was well advised to leave the state.

Nelson, after a short time in Illinois, established Mission Institute near Quincy, Illinois, which was to furnish missionaries to the Western part of the United States. The Institute was labeled by Marion citizens as "Nelson's College" and it was generally assumed to be an abolitionist factory.[43] Nothing specifically is known of Nelson's activities for a number of years. However, William H. Siebert names the Quincy college as an integral link in the underground railroad.

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[42] A letter by William McPheeters to Margaret C. Robb, June 12, 1836, Missouri History Papers, M.H.S.

Nelson, according to N. A. Hunt, was encouraging the students to patrol the river and escort runaway slaves to a station in the escape route to the North.[44] In the summer of 1841 three men, James E. Burr and George Thompson, both from Missouri Institute; and Alanson Work, a local man living near the school, were caught trying to steal slaves in Missouri. Thomas Hart, in a letter to Thomas Benton, Jr., dated July 24, relates the excitement which ensued from this attempted kidnapping.

> . . . three deluded abolition fanatics from Dr. Nelson's Institute near Quincy, Illinois [were arrested] . . . as soon as it was known that they were students from Dr. Nelson's School, a mob collected around the jail, and threatened to tear down the jail & Lynch them on [sic] spot.[45]

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[43] Perkins, pp. 266-267.

[44] N. A. Hunt on Mission Institute cited in Wilbur H. Siebert, The Underground Railroad from Slavery to Freedom (New York: Macmillan Co., 1899), pp. 155-156.

[45] A letter by Thomas Curd Hart to Thomas Benton, Jr., July 24, 1841, Benton MSS, M.H.S.

This shows without question the reputation Nelson enjoyed in Missouri.

A few days later on the 24 of July Nelson was to have preached at Marion College. The excitement and hostility toward Nelson was still running high. When it was learned that Nelson was to be at the college, about twenty persons led by John Bosley, a principal character in the 1836 camp-meeting, came to the school chapel to prevent Nelson from speaking. Nelson was forewarned by friends not to come,[46] advice which he was wise to follow under the circumstances.

Several other minor incidences occur in later years between Nelson and Marion County. On the night of March 8, 1843, the chapel at Mission Institute was burned to the ground, an act of reprisal by Missourians upon the abolitionist activities. Later that same year Nelson had occasion to go to Missouri; the exact nature of the trip is not known. Yet the timing coincided with the return from Illinois of several runaway slaves. A citizens' committee was established to investigate the charges made by the Negroes against their would-be kidnappers. The evidence was lacking for legal prosecution yet the investigators, ". . .

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[46] Ibid.

fully persuaded of the guilt of the accused, . . ." recommended that Dr. D. P. Nelson be required to leave within four days from Missouri.[47]

Whether Nelson was guilty or not, his presence in the state engendered bitterness among Missouri's slaveholders. It is certain that Nelson knew the general hostility toward him. Yet no one discounted his courage, and he often regretted being run out of Missouri in 1836.

But Nelson's boldness at this time may have stemmed from his general disavowal of abolitionist connections in a letter to the Quincy Whig dated October 25, 1843. The letter is signed by a David D. Nelson, but no doubt was written by Nelson, the Missouri outcast.

It must be kept in mind that Nelson's letter comes at a time when most men of reason are disassociating themselves from the Garrison type abolitionist furor. Nelson does not become pro-slavery; he desired instead that discussion, reason and prayer be used to persuade slaveholders of their evil. He denounces abolitionists generally for not exhibiting the spirit of the Gospel. It is not unlikely that

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[47] Missouri Republican. December 12, 1843.

Nelson foresaw the tragic events to come, for he stated that if abolitionist measures were carried out the land would be deluged in blood. He concluded by saying, "I bid them [the abolitionists] an eternal fare_well_ [sic]. Yours for the law and Constitution."[48]

Nelson died within a year, on October 17, 1844, succumbing to an epileptic seizure, an illness which plagued him in his later years.

By the close of the period under consideration, 1835-1845, Nelson was dead; Lovejoy had been murdered at Alton, Illinois; Potts had become the pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church in St. Louis and a leader in the Old School wing of the church in Missouri; Marion College had been sold to the Masonic fraternity of Missouri for a college and orphanage late in 1843; and the slavery controversy was having fresh fuel thrown upon it with the beginning of the Mexican War.

On November 17, 1845, a state constitutional convention was assembled. A petition on the subject of abolition of slavery was introduced and a motion immediately was made not to receive the petition.

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[48] _Quincy Whig_. October 25, 1843.

The motion carried 63-0,[49] thus indicating a complete triumph of the anti-abolitionists during the decade 1835-1845.

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[49] Missouri State Convention Journal, 1845, pp. 38-39.

CONCLUSION

The historical data that has been presented substantiates the five major hypotheses upon which this study was based. It is clear that on the question of slavery and abolition the Presbyterian Church at the national level attempted to mitigate the conflict and retain the church's inclusive structure. At the regional level a wide range of opinion was to be found. This, no doubt, stems from the equivocal nature of the national Presbyterians' position and is reflected in the theological statements of Charles Hodge, James Thornwell, and Albert Barnes. While all three men appealed to Scripture for authority the regional character of their arguments gives evidence to the strong influence exerted by the culture in which they were immersed.

The events in Marion County, Missouri, during the decade 1835-1845 demonstrate the confrontation between clergy and laymen on the question of abolitionism. In such a confrontation we see the strong appeal of the secular position. David Nelson, known for his evangelistic preaching and influence within the Presbyterian Church in Northeast Missouri, had little effect upon the growing tension created by the challenge to local social values. There is, in fact, a strong suggestion that his efforts solidified opinion against him and did little to change the situation in light of his own moral persuasion. How much direct influence Nelson had in getting the people of Missouri to change their views on the question of slavery is not known. It is, however, clear that the citizens of Marion County felt as competent, if not more so, than the clergy in judging the moral question of slavery. The fact that people could and did argue from the religious point of view in defense of slavery shows dramatically that religion during this period tended to reinforce prevailing social ideas. The result was that citizens of Marion County had a religious framework which justified their views of slavery but also made them totally intolerant toward divergent views which challenged those preconceptions.

The fact that Marion College passed under pro-slavery influence further exemplified the tendency of the church to yield to prevailing social values on the question of slavery and abolition.

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BIOGRAPHY

Richard Eugene Foushee, born March 2, 1938, in Tulsa, Oklahoma, completed college preparatory at Hoover High School, Glendale, California, in 1956, and obtained a B.A. in political science from Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois, in 1960. Upon graduation he was commissioned as an officer in the U.S. Infantry and served for two years in Germany. He returned to the United States and settled in St. Louis, Missouri, working as a field representative for the Republican National Committeeman for that state, and later working for the St. Louis Board of Education as a school social worker.

His graduate career began in the fall of 1964 when he received an NDEA fellowship for work on a Ph.D. in American Studies at St. Louis University. His doctoral dissertation is entitled: "The Reciprocal Influences Between Clergy and Laity on Social Issues: An Historical Investigation of Missouri's Presbyterian Clergy in Marion County on the Subject of Abolition -- 1835-1845."

Mr. Foushee's teaching career to date includes: curriculum area specialist and instructor in American Studies at the Experiment in Higher Education, Southern Illinois University (1967-1968), and assistant professor of history at Hope College, Holland, Michigan (1969).

He is married to Sandra Claire Smith Foushee and has one son, Eric Fontaine.